



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee approves the list of individuals to receive grazing permits within the Navajo Partitioned Lands

WINDOW ROCK – Last Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee considered Legislation No. 0365-18, which seeks to concur with the Navajo Partitioned Land Joint District Grazing Committee’s recommended list of individuals for the granting of grazing permits on the Navajo Partitioned Lands.

The NPL Joint District Grazing Committee consists of 14 grazing officials, who represent the 14 chapters that are part of the NPL, who manage and enforce matters related to rangeland, livestock, and to inform and educate potential permittees on cancelled grazing permits on the NPL. The committee is also tasked with determining the eligibility of grazing permits on the NPL.

In 1940, administrative control of livestock grazing on the NPL began with the issuance of the first formal grazing permits on the 1882 Executive Order Reservation. Pursuant to federal regulations, grazing permits were cancelled by court order in Oct. 1973 and never reissued within the NPL.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tside To ii), who sponsored the legislation, asked for his committee colleagues to support the bill to initiate the process of reissuing the grazing permits within the NPL.

“The NPL grazing committee has recommended a list of individuals to reissue cancelled grazing permits based on the NPL grazing permit eligibility requirements. If approved, the recommended list will be forwarded to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This issue has been ongoing for many years and the committee needs to support the legislation to have the individuals gain back their grazing rights,” stated Delegate Phelps.

In February 2017, the committee passed legislation to approve the Navajo eligibility requirements to qualify for a grazing permit on NPL. The listed individuals must meet the following criteria:

1. Appear as a permittee on the list of permits cancelled on Oct. 14, 1973.
2. Be listed on the 1974 or 1975 Bureau of Indian Affairs enumeration within NPL.
3. Lived continuously within the enumeration area where the cancelled permit was used.
4. Be an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation.
5. Not have received any of the following accommodations:

- a. Signed an accommodation agreement to remain on Hopi Partitioned Lands; or
 - b. Received a permit to graze livestock on lands outside the NPL.
6. Should new permits be issued for the NPL under 25 C.F.R. section 161.401 legally recognized heirs of the permittees who appear on the list of permits cancelled on Oct. 14, 1973, will have first priority.

In the legislation, the recommended individuals for grazing permits are listed within four categories, "Eligible and living," "Eligible through heirship," "Verification Application," and "Not eligible." The BIA has set a deadline of Nov. 23, 2018 for the Navajo Nation to submit the recommendation list for review.

NPL Joint District Grazing Committee secretary Francis Lester stated that the grazing committee has worked diligently with the BIA and the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture to identify the individuals and utilize the eligibility requirements.

In support of the reissuance of grazing permits on the NPL, RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jedito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) stated that the committee has worked hard on this issue for the last four years and commended the NPL grazing committee for completing the task.

"It is time to issue the grazing permits to the people on the NPL. The people have waited since the 1970's to receive back their grazing rights. Many of the permittees did not live long enough to see their grazing permits again, however, their decedents will have the opportunity to exercise their grazing rights that were taken away from them in the 1970s'," said Delegate Shepherd.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0365-18 with a 5-0 vote with four amendments and a directive for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to correspond with the committee regarding the process on the recommended list within 30 days. The committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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