



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Tachee/Blue Gap community continues push for uranium site cleanup**

**TACHEE/BLUE GAP, Ariz.** – Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), who represents the Tachee/Blue Gap Chapter on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council, said on Wednesday that community members and chapter officials continue to urge the federal EPA to proceed with the cleanup of the local Claim 28 abandoned uranium site.

In 2015, the United States and the Navajo Nation reached an agreement for the federal government to fund assessments of 16 priority abandoned uranium mine sites, which includes the Claim 28 site in Tachee/Blue Gap. Last year, through the Cyprus Amax and Western Nuclear Settlement called for the cleanup of 94 uranium mine sites on the Navajo Nation with a total estimated value of \$600 million in federal dollars.

"The community continues to seek immediate resolution regarding Claim 28. Working closely with the local community members especially the Nez family, who has been spearheading this issue at the local and national levels. Further, the Southwest Research and Information Center of UNM also continues to assist the local chapter. The collaborative work has led to the effective advocacy and to having the Claim 28 site designated as a priority," stated Delegate Begay.

He added that he continues to work with tribal and federal officials to ensure the concerns of the community are heard and addressed. The objective for the community is to bring closure to the abandoned uranium mine site and to ensure that there is no further uranium exposure to community members in the future.

The community recently held a series of meetings and events with local chapter members, the federal and Navajo Nation EPA, and the Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission, which was established in 2015 by the Navajo Nation Council for the purpose of studying and drawing conclusions about the impacts of uranium mining and uranium processing on the Navajo Nation and to use the studies to issue recommendations for policies, laws, and regulations.

"I want to encourage our communities to continue working on uranium mine cleanups together along with the federal EPA through the different phases of this process," said Delegate Begay. "I

would like to see more and more of our constituents become educated on these matters and to see greater participation and dialogue from our community membership.”

For decades, nearly 30 million tons of uranium ore was mined on or near the Navajo Nation for the purpose of producing nuclear weapons during the Cold War. There are over 500 abandoned uranium sites across the Navajo Nation.

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