



# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Navajo Nation leaders express disappointment with Department of the Interior's scheduled celebration at Chaco Culture National Historic Park**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Speaker Crystalyne Curley expressed their disappointment with the U.S. Department of the Interior's recent announcement of a celebratory event scheduled for June 11 at the Chaco National Historical Park, to mark the recent action by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland to withdraw nearby lands from future leasing and mining claims, which will have devastating impacts for many Navajo allotment owners and their families.

"The Navajo Nation wholeheartedly disagrees with Secretary Haaland's recent action to withdraw lands. Our concerns, along with thousands of Navajo allotment owners, over the land withdrawal were ignored and now the Department of the Interior continues to disrespect the Navajo Nation by hosting a celebration. The financial and economic losses that are impacting many Navajo families as a result of the Secretary's recent land withdrawal are nothing to celebrate. As leaders of the Navajo Nation, we support the Navajo allottees who oppose the withdrawal of these public lands. We demand that the Department of the Interior reconsider and cancel the event," said President Nygren.

On April 27, the Navajo Nation Council's Naabik'iyatí Committee approved Resolution NABIAP-11-23, opposing the withdrawal of approximately 351,000 acres of public land surrounding Chaco Canyon. At the same time, the Committee rescinded the Navajo Nation's previous position supporting a five-mile buffer zone.

"The Department of the Interior continues to state that the land withdrawal does not apply to Navajo allottees, however, the Secretary's action completely diminishes the economic feasibility of the mineral rights of allotment owners. Allotment owners were not adequately consulted despite claims that there was significant consultation. The previous leadership of the Navajo Nation attempted to compromise by proposing a five-mile buffer as opposed to the ten-mile, but our voices were not heard. We remain open to discussing this matter with the Interior Department, but we also want the voices of the Navajo allotment owners to be respected," stated Speaker Curley.

President Nygren and Speaker Curley urge the Department of the Interior to cancel the June 11 celebratory event and continue to urge U.S. President Joe Biden and Secretary Haaland to reconsider the recent decision as it is a breach of trust between the Department of the Interior,

the federal government, and the Navajo Nation; the decision is unjust and may violate individual landowner rights (Navajo allottees). The Navajo Nation respectfully requests the Biden Administration work toward a solution that respects the rights and dignity of the Navajo people due to the long-lasting consequences to the Navajo people.

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