



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Eastern Navajo Land Commission reviews uranium-cleanup updates and technology plans



The Eastern Navajo Land Commission received a report on advancing uranium-cleanup technology from the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency.

BACA, N.M. – During a recent meeting, the Eastern Navajo Land Commission (ENLC) received federal updates on uranium-cleanup initiatives, new technology proposals, and ongoing negotiations with U.S. agencies regarding abandoned uranium mines across eastern Navajo communities.

Navajo Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) Executive Director Stephen Etsitty briefed commissioners on recent meetings in Washington, D.C., where federal leaders requested more information about the Navajo Nation's proposed use of High-Pressure Slurry Ablation (HPSA) technology.

ENLC Vice Chair Steven R. Arviso highlighted long-term federal intentions and how prepared is the Navajo Nation. "In the event that the current federal government comes in and declares to reopen one or two of your mines, the Nation needs a contingency plan in place," said Arviso.

Commissioner Lester Yazzie raised concerns about federal consultation, stating that tribal sovereignty must remain central, "We got to remember to protect our tribal lands, to protect our sacred sites, and our sovereignty."

Commissioners emphasized the need for community-level clarity and local engagement. Director for the Office of Eastern Navajo Land Committee, Leonard Tsosie said, "People that

are directly affected want to be informed. We need to have a meeting for them to hear this straight from leadership and not as a report. Our people need to understand the process.”

“Every response we received addressed what more the Navajo Nation could do about these sites,” Etsitty said, noting that agencies are examining how recycling uranium from waste piles aligns with national critical minerals priorities. He added that the Navajo Nation is preparing a Department of Energy grant application to expand use of the technology. “Right now, we are working with DISA to put together this grant application,” he said.

Commissioner George Tolth underscored the importance of unified communication adding, “We need to tell our community that this body is really trying, and we have a goal in mind.”

The Commission also heard a presentation from BHP on a proposed uranium-waste repository at Ambrosia Lake. BHP Representative Liz Ruedig stated, “At BHP, we believe the area is geologically suitable. There is no threat to groundwater and there are no nearby residents.” She later added that the site could potentially remove all of Navajo’s waste.

ENLC Chair Danny Simpson concluded by emphasizing coordinated action saying, “These things are moving quickly and our communities want this. What we hear is from the Navajo Nation is unification. We want that one voice.”

Following the discussion, the Commission approved Resolution ENLC-02-2025 supporting a NEPA request for grant funding to use high-pressure slurry ablation to remediate uranium mine waste. The measure implements a more effective comprehensive cleanup while pursuing strategies that reduce long-term community impacts.

The Eastern Navajo Land Commission accepted the uranium clean up report and advanced related resolution with a vote of five in favor with none opposed.

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