



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 24, 2026**

### **Navajo-Hopi Land Commission and Bureau of Indian Affairs convene to address federal obligations under the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act**



**Members of the Navajo Hopi Land Commission emphasized that federal mandates and obligations under the Settlement Act need to be completed.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Thursday, the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission (NHLC) held a formal listening session with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) leadership to discuss outstanding federal obligations under the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act, followed by a site visit to the Padres Mesa Demonstration Ranch to review operations and infrastructure.

The meeting focused on relocation certification backlogs, grazing administration, land selections, trust fund matters, and the transition of responsibilities previously carried out by the former Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR).

NHLC Chairman Otto Tso emphasized that federal mandates under the Settlement Act must be completed before responsibilities are fully transferred.

“We want to make sure the trust responsibility is carried out and that the Settlement Act is complied with. There is unfinished business, and we need to resolve it in a structured way,” Chair Tso said.

Tribal officials presented a comprehensive list of pending and appealed relocation applications and urged timely certification to provide closure for families who have waited years for resolution. Leaders discussed coordinating with BIA to review pending certifications

in organized batches to accelerate decisions, while also exploring streamlined administrative remedies for remanded and appealed cases to reduce prolonged litigation.

The NHLC requested a review of federal construction contracts to address structural deficiencies and warranty concerns in relocation homes. Leadership expressed interest in utilizing existing tribal housing programs and Navajo Nation–approved contractors to assume construction and rehabilitation responsibilities moving forward, creating greater accountability and local oversight.

Grazing operations were identified as an immediate priority, as relocatee ranchers depend on biannual livestock tallies, permit oversight, and maintenance of windmills and water infrastructure previously overseen by ONHIR.

During the session, leaders discussed the temporary assignment of a BIA range technician to conduct livestock tallies and assist families who need to transport or sell cattle. Officials also reviewed the need for an interim administrative process to ensure cattle sales, brand transfers, and permit compliance can continue without disruption. Maintaining water systems and range infrastructure during the transition period was emphasized as critical to protecting livestock and sustaining operations.

Following the listening session, Navajo Nation leaders and BIA officials conducted a site visit to Padres Mesa Ranch to assess livestock operations, facilities, and infrastructure firsthand.

The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission manages the ranch on an interim basis. During the visit, officials discussed establishing clear authority for cattle sales and determining long-term governance options. Leadership also emphasized preserving the Native American Beef initiative and ensuring that any revenues generated continue to benefit relocatee families as required under the Settlement Act.

NHLC members requested collaboration to finalize outstanding land selections, address survey discrepancies, and review matters tied to the Navajo Rehabilitation Trust Fund. BIA leadership indicated they are currently fact-gathering and committed to continued coordination.

“This is about honoring commitments and protecting our people. We are prepared to work proactively to ensure these responsibilities are met,” said Chair Tso.

Both parties agreed to maintain structured follow-up meetings to ensure operational continuity, statutory compliance, and fulfillment of federal trust responsibilities.

###