

THE NAVAJO NATION
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
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LEGISLATION NO: _0172-26_

SPONSOR: Curtis Yanito

TITLE: An Action Relating to Resources and Development and Naabik'íyáti' Committees, and the Navajo Nation Council; Designation Tooh Ahidiilíní, the Confluence of the Little Colorado River and the Colorado River, the Little Colorado River Gorge, and Other Related Cultural, Religious, and Spiritual Sites within the Bodaway/Gap Chapter as a Sacred Site

Date posted: July 08, 2026 at 1:03PM

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Office of Legislative Services
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LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY SHEET

Tracking No. 0172-26

DATE: July 8, 2026

TITLE OF RESOLUTION: AN ACTION RELATING TO RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT AND NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES, AND THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL; DESIGNATING TOOH AHIDIILÍNÍ, THE CONFLUENCE OF THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER AND THE COLORADO RIVER, THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER GORGE, AND OTHER RELATED CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND SPIRITUAL SITES WITHIN THE BODAWAY/GAP CHAPTER AS A SACRED SITE

PURPOSE: This legislation, if approved, would formally designate Tooh Ahidiilíní, the Confluence of the Little Colorado River and the Colorado River, the Little Colorado River Gorge, and other related cultural, religious, and spiritual sites situated within and adjacent to the Bodaway/Gap Chapter as a Sacred Site of the Navajo Nation, recognize that the designated Sacred Site is a cultural resource and Traditional Cultural Property entitled to the protections of the Navajo Nation Cultural Resources Protection Act, 19 N.N.C. § 1021, and affirm the Navajo Nation's position, as an exercise of its sovereignty and Diné fundamental law, opposing unwanted commercial or industrial development of the Confluence and the Little Colorado River Gorge that would impair the cultural and spiritual qualities of the site and its associated ceremonial practices.

FINAL AUTHORITY: Navajo Nation Council

VOTE REQUIRED: Simple Majority

This written summary does not address recommended amendments as may be provided by the standing committees. The Office of Legislative Counsel requests each Council Delegate to review each proposed resolution in detail.

PROPOSED NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL RESOLUTION

25th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL—Fourth Year, 2026

Introduced By:

Primary Sponsor

Tracking No. 0172-26

AN ACTION

**RELATING TO RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT AND
NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEES, AND THE NAVAJO NATION
COUNCIL; DESIGNATING TOOH AHIDIILÍNÍ, THE CONFLUENCE OF
THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER AND THE COLORADO RIVER, THE
LITTLE COLORADO RIVER GORGE, AND OTHER RELATED
CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND SPIRITUAL SITES WITHIN THE
BODAWAY/GAP CHAPTER AS A SACRED SITE**

BE IT ENACTED:

SECTION ONE. AUTHORITY

A. The Resources and Development Committee is a standing committee of the Navajo Nation Council that exercises oversight authority over the land, environment, and cultural resources of the Navajo Nation for the purpose, among others, of establishing Navajo Nation policy with respect to the utilization of Navajo Nation resources and protecting the rights, interests, sacred sites, and freedoms of the Navajo Nation and People to such resources, now and for future generations. 2 N.N.C. §§ 500(A), (C) and (C)(1).

- 1 B. The Naabik'íyáti' Committee is a standing committee of the Navajo Nation Council
2 with the authority to hear proposed resolutions requiring final action by the Navajo
3 Nation Council. 2. N.N.C. §§164 (A)(9), 700 (A) and 701 (A)(3).
- 4 C. The Navajo Nation Council is the governing body of the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. §
5 102 (A). Statements of policy must be reviewed and approved by resolution by the
6 appropriate standing committee(s) and the Navajo Nation Council. 2 N.N.C. §
7 164(A).

8

9 SECTION TWO. FINDINGS

- 10 A. Diné Natural Law declares and teaches that the rights and freedoms of the people to
11 the use of land, natural resources, and sacred sites must be accomplished through the
12 proper protocol of respect and offering, and that these practices must be protected and
13 preserved, for they are the foundation of Diné spiritual ceremonies and the Diné life
14 way. 1 N.N.C. § 205(F).
- 15 B. The Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation Department is responsible for
16 the protection, preservation, and management planning of the Navajo Nation's
17 cultural resources pursuant to the Navajo Nation Cultural Resources Protection Act,
18 19 N.N.C. §§ 1001-1061.
- 19 C. *Tooh Ahidiilini*, the Confluence of the Little Colorado River and the Colorado River,
20 together with the Little Colorado River Gorge and the related cultural, religious, and
21 spiritual sites situated within and adjacent to the Bodaway/Gap Chapter, is a place of
22 profound and continuing significance to the *Nihookáá Diné'é Bila'ashdla'ii*, the Five-
23 Fingered People, and the Diné, Hopi, Zuni, Southern Paiute, and White Mountain and
24 Cibecue Apache peoples identify this landscape as part of their ancestral homelands.
- 25 D. The Little Colorado River is known in the Diné language as *Bits'íís Al'tsozí*, the river
26 with the tiny soul, and Colorado River is known as *Bits'íís Nineez* the river with the
27 long soul, and the Diné continue to offer prayers and corn pollen at *Tooh Ahidiilini* to
28 communicate with the rivers, the wind, the sky, and the canyons, and to petition for
29 protection, prosperity, and health.
- 30

- 1 E. The Confluence is central to the Blessing Way, which is the foundation of Navajo
2 ceremonial life, and to numerous associated ceremonies, and Diné offerings have
3 been made at the Confluence for the protection of Diné servicemembers during World
4 War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.
- 5 F. On October 4, 2016, the Navajo Nation *Hataalii* Advisory Council, working through
6 the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department, issued a Position Statement
7 finding that direct impacts from development to *Tooh Ahidiilini* would diminish the
8 effectiveness of the Navajo ceremonies practiced to restore health and balance, and
9 unanimously opposing development of the Confluence, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.
- 10 G. On September 3, 2021, the Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation
11 Department issued correspondence recognizing *Tooh Ahidiilini* as a sacred place and
12 Traditional Cultural Property informally recognized by the Navajo Nation, and
13 affirming that this informal designation affords protection under the Navajo Nation
14 Cultural Resources Protection Act, 19 N.N.C. § 1021, attached hereto as **Exhibit B**.
15 The correspondence also indicates that the National Park Service and the Navajo
16 Nation have developed a draft Traditional Cultural Property nomination to the United
17 States National Register of Historic Places for the Grand Canyon National Park,
18 which identifies the Confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers (GCES-
19 33) as a sacred place and a contributing element to the larger traditional cultural
20 landscape of the Grand Canyon.
- 21 H. The Bodaway/Gap Chapter, by Resolution No. BA-002-013-18 adopted February 24,
22 2018 by a vote of 55 in favor, 0 opposed, directed its Chapter Officials and Council
23 Delegate to do all things necessary and proper to have the Confluence designated as a
24 Sacred Site, and rescinded Resolution No. BA-09-092-12 relating to the Grand
25 Canyon Escalade Project, attached hereto as **Exhibit C**.
- 26 I. The District III Grazing Committee of the Western Navajo Agency, by Resolution
27 No. D3GCM 2021-12-03, attached hereto as **Exhibit D**, and the grazing permittees
28 and land users in the area of the Little Colorado River, by Affidavit of Opposition
29 dated June 24, 2020, attached hereto as **Exhibit E**, have supported the designation of
30 the Confluence as a Sacred Site and opposed the proposed Big Canyon Pumped

1 Storage Project and other commercial or industrial development of the Little
2 Colorado River Gorge.

3 J. The designation of the Confluence as a Sacred Site has been supported by resolution
4 of the Cameron Chapter (CAM-079-286 #4), the Sawmill Chapter (SAW-09-14-23-
5 03), the To’Nanees’Dizi Local Government (TND-09-12-2023), the Tonalea Chapter
6 (TN24-10-05), the LeChee Chapter (LC10082023C), the Fort Defiance Chapter
7 (FDC-2023-OCT-10-02), the Chinle Chapter (CHIN-MAR-24-019), and the
8 Coppermine Chapter (CO-10-003-24), attached hereto collectively as **Exhibit F**, and
9 by all five Navajo Nation Agency Councils, namely the Western Navajo Agency
10 Council (WNAC24-08-NB6), the Fort Defiance Agency Council (FDAC: 07-24-014),
11 the Central (Chinle) Navajo Agency Council (CAC-SEP-28-05), the Eastern Navajo
12 Agency Council (ENAC-12-2024-033), and the Northern Navajo Agency Council
13 (NNAC-219-2024), attached hereto collectively as **Exhibit G**.

14 K. A Navajo Nation legislative designation identifying *Tooh Ahidiilini* as a Sacred Site,
15 or *hodiwin*, is a strong external expression of the Navajo Nation’s sovereignty in
16 protecting and cooperatively managing the Confluence with the National Park
17 Service, and is consistent with the freedom of religion guaranteed under 1 N.N.C. § 4
18 and the duties declared under Diné Natural Law at 1 N.N.C. § 205.

19 20 **SECTION THREE. DEFINITIONS**

21 A. “Confluence” or “*Tooh Ahidiilini*” means the place where the Little Colorado River
22 joins the Colorado River, together with the Little Colorado River Gorge and the
23 related cultural, religious, and spiritual sites situated within and adjacent to the
24 Bodaway/Gap Chapter, as identified in the map and boundary description prepared by
25 the Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation Department, attached hereto as
26 **Exhibit H**.

27 B. “Sacred Site” means a place that is sacred to the Diné by virtue of its established
28 cultural, religious, and spiritual significance, at which the proper protocol of respect
29 and offering is practiced as a foundation of Diné spiritual ceremonies and the Diné
30 life way within the meaning of Diné Natural Law, 1 N.N.C. § 205, and that is

1 recognized as *hodiyyin*. A Sacred Site designated under this resolution is also a cultural
2 resource and a Traditional Cultural Property eligible for protection under the Navajo
3 Nation Cultural Resources Protection Act, 19 N.N.C. §§ 1001-1061, and a traditional
4 cultural property within the meaning of National Park Service Bulletin 38.
5

6 **SECTION FOUR. DESIGNATION**

- 7 A. The Navajo Nation hereby designates *Tooh Ahidiilini*, the Confluence of the Little
8 Colorado River and the Colorado River, the Little Colorado River Gorge, and the
9 related cultural, religious, and spiritual sites situated within and adjacent to the
10 Bodaway/Gap Chapter, as a Sacred Site of the Navajo Nation.
- 11 B. The Navajo Nation recognizes that the Sacred Site designated herein is a cultural
12 resource and Traditional Cultural Property entitled to the protections of the Navajo
13 Nation Cultural Resources Protection Act, including the requirement under 19 N.N.C.
14 § 1021 that the sponsor of any undertaking obtain the approval of the Navajo Nation
15 Historic Preservation Officer prior to implementation or authorization of the
16 undertaking.
- 17 C. The Navajo Nation opposes commercial or industrial development of the Confluence
18 and the Little Colorado River Gorge that is unwanted by the local grazing permittees
19 and land users and that would impair the cultural and spiritual qualities of *Tooh*
20 *Ahidiilini* and the ceremonial practices associated with it.
- 21 D. The Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation Department is encouraged to
22 evaluate *Tooh Ahidiilini* for listing in the Navajo Nation Register of Cultural
23 Properties pursuant to 19 N.N.C. § 1011, and continue to coordinate with the National
24 Park Service regarding the cooperative management and protection of the
25 Confluence.
- 26 E. All appropriate divisions, departments, and officials of the Navajo Nation are
27 encouraged to do all things necessary and proper to effectuate this designation.
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1 **SECTION FIVE. SAVINGS CLAUSE**

- 2 A. Nothing in this resolution shall be construed to alter or affect the valid existing water
3 rights of any party, including any tribal government or the United States, or to alter or
4 affect any water rights settlement or adjudication, whether settled or to be settled in
5 the future.
- 6 B. Nothing in this resolution shall be construed to alter or affect the 2006 Navajo-Hopi
7 Intergovernmental Compact or any jurisdictional matter between the Navajo Nation
8 and any other tribe or government.
- 9 C. Nothing in this resolution shall be construed to alter or affect the boundaries of the
10 Navajo Nation or of any other tribe or government.
- 11 D. Consistent with 1 N.N.C. § 207(B), the references to Diné Natural Law in this
12 resolution provide guiding principles and the cultural foundation for this designation
13 and shall not be construed to create any independent, legally enforceable right,
14 entitlement, or cause of action.
- 15 E. If any provision of this Action is determined invalid by the Supreme Court of the
16 Navajo Nation, or by a Navajo Nation District Court without appeal to the Navajo
17 Nation Supreme Court, the remainder of this Action shall remain the law of the
18 Navajo Nation.

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20 **SECTION SIX. EFFECTIVE DATE**

21 This Action shall become effective in accordance with 2 N.N.C. § 221(A) and (C).
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