



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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25th Navajo Nation Council and DURAC calls for stronger protections and removal of repository cell



Members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council and DURAC convened to advance remediation efforts across the Navajo Nation.

COVE, Ariz. — In a recent meeting, members of the 25th Navajo Nation Council joined by members of the Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission (DURAC), convened at the Cove Chapter House to review ongoing uranium remediation efforts across the Navajo Nation, evaluate emerging uranium development proposals, and advance recommendations aimed at protecting Diné communities from the lasting impacts of historical uranium mining. The meeting brought together representatives from federal, tribal, and community organizations to provide technical updates on major remediation projects while commissioners considered additional policy actions addressing long-term environmental health and radiation exposure.

Technical presentations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, Navajo Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Department, and community organizations highlighted remediation activities within the Lukachukai Mountain Mining District, the Shiprock Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act Disposal Site, and the Old Church Rock Mine Time Critical Removal Action project. Presenters outlined engineering approaches to isolate radioactive waste, strengthen groundwater treatment systems, restore abandoned uranium mine sites, and reduce long-term environmental and public health risks.

Commissioners also reviewed consultations involving the proposed La Jara Mesa uranium mine near Mount Taylor, emphasizing the importance of meaningful tribal consultation, public participation, comprehensive environmental review, and the protection of culturally significant landscapes before any future uranium development proceeds. Additional discussions focused on Navajo energy policy,

amendments to the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), and continued oversight of uranium-related remediation activities affecting Navajo communities.

In attendance were Navajo Nation Speaker Crystalyne Curley and Council Delegate Curtis Yanito, who reaffirmed the Navajo Nation Council's commitment to ensuring federal agencies remain accountable while advancing cleanup efforts in uranium-impacted communities.

"The Navajo people have lived with the consequences of uranium development for generations. As we move forward, every cleanup effort must be guided by transparency, scientific integrity, meaningful community engagement, and respect for Diné values. Our responsibility is to ensure that future generations inherit healthier lands than those we received," said Speaker Crystalyne Curley.

Council Delegate Curtis Yanito emphasized that long-term accountability must accompany remediation efforts.

"The creation of the uranium waste cell site at Tse Tah in 2012 was done without consent of the family that holds the grazing permit and the approval of Teec Nos Pos Chapter," said Delegate Yanito. "The Navajo Nation bulldozed the site without regard to the affected families. Teec Nos Pos Chapter approved maintenance activities only in April 2011. The Chapter unanimously opposed the construction in August 2012. It is critical that this properly reviewed and with corrections to be made."

Commissioners also examined ongoing concerns surrounding the Tse Tah Repository Cell and the Tso family homestead. A letter approved by the commission and submitted to the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency requests the removal of the repository cell and restoration of the affected homestead, citing concerns that the repository was constructed without the family's consent, remains in deteriorating condition, and presents continuing environmental and public health risks. The commission further recommended pursuing a Time Critical Removal Action and evaluating federal funding opportunities to safely remove the repository while restoring the site for future grazing and traditional land use.

Supporting observations from a March 2026 site visit documented residences located within one-quarter mile of the repository, evidence of radioactive waste remaining outside the containment area, deteriorating drainage conditions, continued livestock access, and concerns regarding vegetation traditionally used for cultural and medicinal purposes. The report also noted that previous monitoring recommendations issued by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory had not been fully implemented and recommended designating the repository as a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) priority site while pursuing complete removal under federal Superfund authorities.

Commissioners questioned federal officials regarding groundwater monitoring, air quality, climate resiliency of remediation infrastructure, transportation of uranium materials, repository design, and long-term stewardship of reclaimed sites. Members also emphasized the importance of expanding communication with affected chapters, providing technical information in the Navajo language, and ensuring that traditional ecological knowledge and Diné values remain central components of future remediation planning.

The Diné Uranium Remediation Advisory Commission reviewed a draft resolution supporting amendments to the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, recognizing the continued need to expand assistance for individuals, families, and communities affected by decades of uranium mining and milling across the Navajo Nation. The commission's next regular meeting is scheduled to be held in the Western Agency at Coal Mine Canyon Chapter in August 2026, with the date to be announced.

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