



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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Navajo Nation Council designates Tooh Ahidiilíni Confluence as sacred site



Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Curtis Yanito reflected on years of work seeking greater protection of the Tooh Ahidiilíni Confluence.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — During a Special Navajo Nation Council Session on Monday, the 25th Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0172-26, formally designating Tooh Ahidiilíni, the Confluence of the Little Colorado River and Colorado River, the Little Colorado River Gorge, and related cultural, religious and spiritual sites within and adjacent to the Bodaway/Gap Chapter as a sacred site of the Navajo Nation.

The legislation recognizes the designated area as a cultural resource and Traditional Cultural Property entitled to protections under the Navajo Nation Cultural Resources Protection Act. It also affirms the Navajo Nation's sovereign position, grounded in Diné Fundamental Law, opposing unwanted commercial or industrial development that would impair the cultural and spiritual qualities of the Confluence and ceremonial practices that are rarely taught today.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Curtis Yanito said the designation was long overdue and reflected years of work by local families, community members, cultural practitioners and Navajo Nation programs seeking greater protection for the area.

"Our local people have protected this area for generations, and after years of legal opinions, discussions and work with the community, it is time for the Navajo Nation to formally protect it. There is a long history behind how we reached this point, and this designation gives us another way to protect the Confluence, its cultural significance and the prayers and ceremonies connected to this place," Delegate Yanito said.

Yanito also acknowledged written support from chapters, agency councils and other tribal communities.

The measure recognizes Tooh Ahidiilíní as a place of continuing significance to the Diné and identifies the landscape as part of the ancestral homelands of the Diné, Hopi, Zuni, Southern Paiute, White Mountain Apache and Cibecue Apache peoples. The legislation further acknowledges the continued use of the area for prayers, corn pollen offerings and ceremonies associated with protection, prosperity and health.

The measure builds upon years of formal support for protecting the Confluence. In 2018, the Bodaway/Gap Chapter approved a resolution directing its officials and Council delegate to pursue sacred-site designation for the area. The legislative record also identifies supporting resolutions from several chapters and all five Navajo Nation agency councils.

The Navajo Nation recognizes Tooh Ahidiilíní as a cultural resource and Traditional Cultural Property protected under Navajo law. The legislation encourages the Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation Department to evaluate the site for listing in the Navajo Nation Register of Cultural Properties and to continue coordinating with the National Park Service regarding cooperative management and protection of the Confluence.

The Council also approved a directive requiring the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Heritage and Historic Preservation Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Save the Confluence to meet with the Bodaway/Gap Chapter within 30 days. The entities are directed to provide an update regarding Legislation No. 0172-26 and the sacred-site designation, and to work with the chapter to address its request concerning the inclusion of the area from Marble Canyon to Navajo Bridge in the designation.

The Council approved the legislation by a vote of 18 in favor and none opposed, formally establishing the sacred-site designation and advancing Navajo Nation efforts to protect the area for future generations. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for Legislation No. 0172-26.

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