



Secretary of Interior withdraws from future leasing, mining claims

U.S. Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland recently withdrew future leasing and mining claims public lands that surround the Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The park is about 90 miles northeast of Gallup.

In a June 2 press release, Navajo Nation president Buu Nygren and Speaker of the 25th Navajo Nation Council Hon. Crystalyne Curley spoke against Haaland's decision.

"Despite the Navajo Nation's position, Secretary Haaland proceeded to issue this decision one day after the Navajo Nation commemorated our Treaty Day, which recognizes the Treaty of 1868 and the start of the government-to-government relationship between the Navajo Nation and the United States. The Secretary's action undermines our sovereignty and self-determination," Nygren said.

Nygren went into more detail about how the decision will affect the Navajo Nation.

"Despite my concerns and denunciation, the Department of Interior has moved forward which is highly disappointing. Secretary Haaland's decision impacts Navajo allottees but also disregards the tribe's choice to lease lands for economic development," Nygren said. "Ultimately, this decision jeopardizes future economic opportunities while at the same time placing some 5,600

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Navajo allottees in dire financial constraints.”

Curley also spoke out against the decision.

“The Navajo Nation strongly disagrees with the new public land order and the Department of the Interior’s assertion that there was significant consultation with tribal nations prior to today’s announcement. The current resolution and position of the Navajo Nation supports no land withdrawal,” Curley said.

She spoke about how the Navajo Nation had tried to come to an agreement on this topic in the past.

“The Navajo Nation attempted to compromise by proposing a five-mile buffer as opposed to the 10-mile,” Curley explained. “The Biden Administration has undermined the position of the Navajo Nation with today’s action and impacted the livelihood of thousands of Navajo allotment owners and their families. While we explore our options, we remain open to discussing a path toward compromise.”

In the press release, Nygren and Curley urged U.S. President Joe Biden and Haaland to reconsider this decision “as it is a breach of trust between the Department of the Interior, the federal government, and the Navajo Nation.”

They called the decision “unjust” and said it may violate individual landowner rights.

Nygren requested that the Biden Administration work toward a solution that “respects the rights and dignity of the Navajo people due to the long-lasting consequences to the Navajo People.”

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