



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Department of the Interior Listens to Concerns of the Navajo People

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PHOTO: Navajo Nation leadership participate in roundtable discussion with Department of the Interior's Bryan Newland.

CROWNPOINT, NM — On Wednesday, members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council (NNC), Vice President of the Navajo Nation, and Navajo Nation Eastern Agency (NNEA) allottees participated in a roundtable discussion with United States Department of the Interior's (DOI) Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bryan Newland at T'iiis Ts'ozí Bi' Ołta Gymnasium in Crownpoint, NM.

"We appreciate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Newland, for coming to the Navajo Nation in the Eastern Navajo Agency to listen to leadership and our allottees," stated Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint). "We understand they have a lot of work ahead of them at the Department of the Interior, but this is a beginning, this is a way to start bridging gaps and building these very important relationships."

Newland, of the Bay Mills Ojibwe Indian Community, sat with Navajo leaders to discuss various issues affecting the Navajo Nation that leaders hope will be addressed by United States Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland. The issues discussed revolved around public safety, infrastructure, natural resources, Chaco Cultural National Historical Park (CCNHP), and gas lease sales for NNEA allottees.

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Council Delegate, Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock), voiced her concerns of the lack of funding for public safety on the Navajo Nation. Charles-Newton made a request to use American Rescue Plan Act dollars to build new facilities where the Bureau of Indian Affairs can lease, operate, and maintain the facilities on behalf of the Navajo Nation. Furthermore, increased funding would allow the tribe to employ more police officers to support the current population.

Council Delegate, Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé'álnáoozt'íí, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gad'ii'áhi/Tó Kó'í) advocated for a working partnership with the FBI and federal partners to fully implement the Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act to address and combat violent crimes frequently associated with Indigenous communities. Crotty was newly appointed to the New Mexico Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) Task Force and continues to focus on identifying long term solutions for MMIWR.

Discussion continued with Council Delegate, Rick Nez (T'iistsoh Sikaad, Nenahnezad, Upper Fruitland, Tsé Daa K'aan, Newcomb, San Juan) requesting representation from the federal government to provide basic necessities to the Navajo people. Nez stressed the importance of water and the need to keep the precious resource on the Navajo Nation through dam control, and improving the quality of water with the utilization of water treatment plants for domestic and livestock use.

The proposed ten-mile buffer zone of CCNHP was brought to attention by the NNEA allottees. Allottees opposed the idea of the buffer zone for CCNHP and call upon Navajo leadership, with assistance from DOI, to contest the legislation at the New Mexico state and federal level.

The primary concerns for opposition to the buffer zone is the NNEA allottees' inability to access their land for oil and gas leases with outside companies. A majority of the income for allottees comes from the leases and the buffer zone would put the livelihood of many families at stake.

The allottees want to be respected as individual landowners in Eastern Agency, as they continue to emphasize that it is their land and they work diligently to uphold the land given to them by DOI.

"I really appreciate the dialogue between Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Newland and Navajo leadership, but the trust responsibility is something that we really have to take care of and nurture. This responsibility is to be administered from the federal government to the trustees, which is the Navajo people," said Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tónaneesdizi). "We just want our fair share of funding allocation, not any more or any less and make sure our treaty commitments are met, so that the Navajo people can prosper."

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