



THE NAVAJO NATION

Office of the President and Vice President

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PRESIDENT SHIRLEY COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR ARIZONA SNOWBOWL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Meaningful Consultation with Tribes must be met

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – From his Budget Advisory Council meetings in Herndon, VA., Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., delivered his comments, in writing on behalf of the Navajo Nation to Coconino National Forest representatives asking for an extension and urging meaningful consultation with the Navajo Nation in the proposed Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvement plan.

The National Environmental Protection Agency issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvement for public comment.

Shirley explained “After cursory review of the draft EIS, there are several technical issues that my staff and the communities must carefully consider and weigh in order that meaningful consultation be given to a project of this magnitude that is significantly culturally sensitive.” He continued, “I implore your office to grant a third extension to allow time to formally address the proposal as set forth in the draft EIS.”

President Shirley has stood firm on his objections to any activities on the San Francisco Peaks and reiterates that in his letter. “The San Francisco Peaks is the essence of who we are. It is a Holy place of worship that was placed in the West for our sacred prayers and worship. It is a place where several of our Navajo people have placed theirs and that of their children’s umbilical cords, and is the Holy house of our sacred deities whom we pray to and give our offerings.” He continued, “It is also a place where we gather and collect our sacred herbs for healing and our way of life ceremonies yearlong.” He concluded, “The United States of America will commit genocide by allowing the desecration of the essence of our way of life.”

Shirley expressed his concerns regarding the several factors that would utilize reclaimed wastewater for use in the development of the ski resort. He said, “Notwithstanding the categorical and scientific findings in the draft EIS, the very essence of utilizing reclaimed wastewater amounts

to desecration of a sacred Holy site of the Navajos. Our neighbors the Hopi Tribe also agree with this point.”

In achieving true meaningful consultation, thus the request for an extension to respond, President Shirley referred to an Executive Order of President Bill Clinton in 2000, setting forth a mandate for consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments within the fundamental principle of recognizing that Indian tribes have a unique legal relationship with the United States of America.

Shirley stated, “It is with this recognition that one of the purposes of the Executive Order provides that policies that have tribal implications that have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian tribe must be given meaningful consultation and coordination.”

Further, he said, “The three alternatives to the proposed improvement project do nothing to discuss in a meaningful way continued expansion of the Snow Bowl. For example, both alternatives 1 and 3 do not allow for use of reclaimed wastewater, however they allow for the expansion of the Snow Bowl to move forward. This is a very grave concern of the Navajo Nation and our elders many of who wish to be heard in a meaningful way.”

Shirley gained applause by the Save the Peaks Coalition, with immediate support of the Navajo Nation position. Robert Tohe, Coordinator of Save the Peaks said, “Due to the Forest Services lack of tribal consultation, we believe they have not done an adequate job, as only a few have information on the EIS.” He continued, “We agree with President Shirley in requesting an extension, and commend his office in continuing to stand for his people.”