



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly joins tribal leaders to commend cultural property protection for Mount Taylor

ACOMA, N.M. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly joined four other tribal leaders during to commend the June 14 decision of the New Mexico Cultural Properties Review Committee to place Mount Taylor on the Emergency Listing of the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties.

“The Navajo people are tied to the land and sky through prayers and songs that were sung by the *Holy People* during the creation of the mountains and the world,” the Vice President said. “Our sacred mountains give the Navajo people strength, and through the role of *Nahat’á* – leadership and planning,” said Vice President Shelly.

Joining the Vice President was Zuni Governor Norman Coeeyate, Hopi Chairman Benjamin Nuvamsa, Acoma First Lt. Governor Mark Thompson, and Laguna First Lt. Governor Richard Luarkie.

“Traditional Navajo people have always looked to these mountains for guidance and leadership for the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation Government,” Vice President Shelly said. “Each mountain is honored and respected by Navajo people daily through offering song and prayer.”

The five nominating tribes, including the Pueblos of Acoma, Zuni, and Laguna, the Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Nation, pushed for the designation of areas above 8,000 feet on Mount Taylor and the top of Horace Mesa as a traditional cultural property, or TCP, which is an area deemed important to maintain the cultural identity of a community.



Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly (second from right) joined tribal leaders joined to commend the New Mexico Cultural Properties Review Committee’s June 14 decision to place Mount Taylor on the Emergency Listing of the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties. From left to right is Hopi Tribal Chairman Benjamin Nuvamsa, Laguna First Lt. Governor Richard Luarkie, Zuni Governor Norman Coeeyate, and Acoma First Lt. Governor Mark Thompson.

“Sacred shrines, trails and offering places maintain great cultural and religious significance,” Zuni Governor Coeeyate said. “These properties are imbued with life and spiritual forces that have been blessed by our creator since time immemorial before their use, and once blessed, they are blessed in perpetuity.”

The temporary one-year listing of Mount Taylor to the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties provides a layer of protection by requiring adverse development within the TCP area be reviewed by the New Mexico Historic Preservation Office.

“Mount Taylor is known and remembered in our songs, ceremonies, and shrines,” Hopi Chairman Nuvamsa said.

“The Hopi Tribe provided documentation to the committee in our petition establishing cultural associations with Mount Taylor, and demonstrating that 28 Hopi deities and other religious personages, 36 Hopi clans, and a number of Hopi religious societies have close cultural connections with Mount Taylor.”

Within one year, the nominating tribes must prepare a permanent designation application and must go before the committee to seek a permanent designation.

“We believe in sustaining life on the mountain,” Laguna First Lieutenant Governor Luarkie said. “This means protecting the water resources. We have great concerns that unimpeded development could affect the water resources.”

He said the headwaters for several of Laguna communities are located within the TCP area for which the tribes seek designation. Without healthy water, many forms of life will cease to live, he said.

Arvin Trujillo, executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Alan Downer, director of the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department, and deputy director Steven Begay assisted with Navajo Nation testimony.

The Historic Preservation Department will collaborate with area tribes to responsibly and respectfully manage our Navajo cultural resources, especially Mount Taylor, Mr. Begay said.

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