



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly Applauds Permanent Mount Taylor Traditional Cultural Property Designation

SANTA FE, N.M. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly commended the decision of the New Mexico Cultural Properties Review Committee to permanently designate Mount Taylor as a Traditional Cultural Property on Friday.

"This designation ensures that the Tso Dzil, Mount Taylor, will be protected from harmful development," said Vice President Shelly. "Mount Taylor is the southern sacred mountain of the Navajo people and this designation establishes a process that will ensure the land, the water, and the animals will be protected from harmful development."

During the CPRC hearing, Navajo Vice President Shelly, Laguna Governor John E. Antonio, Sr., Acoma Governor Chandler Sanchez, Hopi Councilman Leroy Lewis, and Zuni Governor Norman Coeeyate represented the nominating tribes.

The nominating tribes, including the Navajo Nation, sought the TCP designation to help protect cultural resources on Mount Taylor including pilgrimage trails, shrines, and archeological sites from increased development.

The permanent TCP designation of Mount Taylor provides a layer of protection by requiring adverse development within the TCP area be reviewed by the New Mexico Historic Preservation Office.

In April 2009, the nominating tribes, including the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna, Zuni, submitted an application to the CPRC for a permanent TCP designation and State listing on the National Register of Historic Places for Mount Taylor.

"Mount Taylor is tied to our way of life and is culturally significant to the Navajo Nation," said Navajo Vice President Shelly. "Through our belief system, the Navajo people are tied to the land and sky through oral history and cultural customs. The Navajo people travel to the four sacred mountains, including the south sacred mountain, Mount Taylor, to obtain soil, tobacco, minerals, medicines, and other resources to create the sacred and powerful *Dahndiilyééh/Dzil Leezh--*Mountain Soil Bundle, which is used in *Hozhó jí* – the Blessing Way Ceremony. *Hozhó jí* is the foundation of all Navajo ceremonies and the Navajo way of life."

In June 2008, the nominating tribes were granted a one year temporary designation for Mount Taylor as a Traditional Cultural Property.

With the temporary designation in place, the nominating tribes worked collectively for one year to gather information needed to support a permanent designation, including the refinement of the TCP boundary, identifying non-contributing properties, and recording historical and cultural use areas.

During the one year process, the nominating tribes signed a cooperative agreement to expedite partnership efforts. In February 2009, the Navajo Nation Council Intergovernmental Relations Committee passed a resolution to support the cooperative agreement.

During the application process, the Navajo Historic Preservation Department and Navajo Land Department utilized GIS mapping techniques and completed land title research at various country land offices to create maps needed to meet the stringent criteria needed in the TCP application.

"Staff of the Division of Natural Resources and Division Director Arvin Trujillo should be commended for their efforts to complete this application," said Vice President Shelly. "The Land Department and Historic Preservation Department contributed significantly to the Mount Taylor TCP application through their long hours of research and commitment to detail the creation of the maps."

During the 2009 Division of Natural Resources Conference and Expo, Vice President Shelly acknowledged Navajo Cultural Specialist Kelly Francis

and Navajo Land Department and Historic Preservation Department employees Michael Holona, Vernon Long, Ryan James, Everett Begay, Tony Joe, and Tim Begay for their efforts to complete the maps for the application. Vice President Shelly also thanked former HPD Deputy Director and Cultural Specialist Steven Begay for initiating efforts to move the Mount Taylor TCP efforts forward.

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