



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., stands with Hopi Tribe in opposition to environmental groups' interference in sovereignty

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., said Wednesday that he strongly supports the Hopi Tribe's resolution to declare local and national environmental groups unwelcome on Hopi land.

"I stand with the Hopi Nation," President Shirley said. "Unlike ever before, environmental activists and organizations are among the greatest threat to tribal sovereignty, tribal self-determination, and our quest for independence."

"By their actions, environmentalists would have tribes remain dependent on the federal government, and that is not our choice. I want the leaders of all Native American nations to know this is our position, and I would ask for their support of our solidarity with the Hopi Nation in the protection of their sovereignty and self-determination, as well as ours."

On Monday, the Hopi Tribal Council unanimously approved a resolution that stated environmentalists have worked to deprive the tribe of markets for its coal resources and the revenue it brings to sustain governmental services, provide jobs for Hopis, and secure the survival of Hopi culture and tradition.

As a result, the Hopi Council stated that the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the Grand Canyon Trust and organizations affiliated with them are no longer welcome on Hopi land.

The Hopi Tribe's resolution states that environmentalists "have manufactured and spread misinformation concerning the water and energy resources of the Hopi Tribe in an effort to instill unfounded fears into the hearts and minds of the Hopi public."

The Council stated that these organizations have acted without regard for the tribe's right to determine how best to develop and manage its natural resources on its land, nor have they shown concern for the future welfare of the tribe and its people.

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The Council cited the closure of the Mohave Generating Station, which used coal exclusively from the Black Mesa Mine, as one example of an action by environmental groups that resulted in the loss of \$6.5 million to \$8.5 million in tribal revenues per year.

President Shirley said he and the Navajo Nation strongly support the positive goals of many environmental organizations, noting the Navajo Nation passed the Natural Resources Protection Act in 2005, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency was recognized last June by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9 for its 30-year partnership in protecting the Navajo environment and its leadership in the development of tribal environmental programs, and that in July he signed legislation into law to create the Navajo Green Commission.

However, he said some Navajo environmentalists and the non-Navajo environmental groups that support them work to the detriment of the Navajo people and Navajo Nation.

“Environmentalists are good at identifying problems but poor at identifying feasible solutions,” President Shirley said. “Most often they don’t try to work with us but against us, giving aid and comfort to those opposed to the sovereign decision-making of tribes. They support tribes only when tribes are aligned with their agenda, such as our opposition to renewed uranium mining in the Grand Canyon and on Native land.”

“Environmentalist actions led to the demise of Navajo logging and the closure of our sawmill at Navajo, New Mexico, but did nothing to replace the 600 jobs that were lost,” President Shirley said. “Environmentalist actions led to the closure of the Mohave Generating Station and the shutdown of the Black Mesa Mine but did nothing to replace the 400 paychecks that were lost or the tribal revenue that was not replaced.”

“Now, environmentalists are doing all they can to prevent the development of the Desert Rock Energy Project, which includes misleading the public by saying Navajos oppose it and failing to mention it is the cleanest coal plant the EPA has ever evaluated, or that its twin is being built right now in Duisburg, Germany, one of the greenest countries in Europe.”

“With overwhelming support, the Navajo Nation Council granted the Desert Rock project all of the permits it needs,” President Shirley said. “Navajos are eager to go

to work there. One thousand jobs would be created to build it, and 400 permanent plant and mining jobs would be created to operate it. It would be a huge benefit to the Navajo people and Navajo Nation. But our greatest opposition comes from environmentalists and the outside groups that silently support them. Unfortunately, many of these people don’t know about Navajos, sovereignty or self-determination. They just want any use of coal stopped. However, coal is the Navajo Nation’s most plentiful resource, and our prosperity depends on it.”

“The independence of the Navajo Nation is dependent on our financial independence, and our financial independence rests largely with the development of Desert Rock,” President Shirley said. “Almost on a daily basis, our people die as a result of poverty which manifests as social problems like alcoholism, drunk driving, drug abuse, child neglect, child abuse, domestic violence, divorce, teen pregnancy, gangs, and lethal violence. Poverty on Navajoland is rampant and one does not have far to look to see it. The solution is employment so our people can put a better roof over their heads, food on the table, shoes on little feet, improve the quality of their lives, and so our families can know the pride that comes from providing for their families now, not sometime in the distant future.”

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