



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vice President Shelly updates Resources Committee on air flight routes over Grand Canyon National Park

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly updated the Resources Committee of the Navajo Nation Council on air flight tours adjacent to the Grand Canyon National Park. The report, prepared by the Navajo Department of Parks and Recreation and the Office of the Vice President, was accepted by the committee by a vote of 4-0.

“As it was directed by the committee before, you asked us to come together with the Navajo Department of Parks and Recreation and the Navajo Land Department – we did that,” Vice President Shelly said. “Right now, there is a draft resolution in place.”

The resolution, which is still in draft form, consists of the Navajo Nation’s official position to economically develop the recently lifted Bennett Freeze area and it is requesting the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service (NPS) for inclusion into the Preferred Alternative for the Grand Canyon Special Flight Rules.

Vice President Shelly said the FAA is the rule maker and he reminded the committee of the need to move steadfastly in collaborating with the Park Service and the FAA on flight standards, and that tribal consultation needs to happen.

According to the resolution’s language, the Vice President would be authorized to execute any and all documents concerning the over flight standards affecting the Western portion of the Navajo Nation.

R. Lamar Whitmer of the Fulcum Group from Scottsdale has been working with the Navajo Nation on this issue.

“The Vice President wrote a letter to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to get you [Navajo Nation] back into the mix,” Whitmer said. “We need to move expeditiously to set-up tribal consultation to make sure the legal process does not move on without us.”

The Cameron Chapter has worked closely with Whitmer and his group on its air flight routes after a resolution was passed by the chapter. This resolution allowed the Fulcum Group permission to work with the Chapter to review FAA regulations for a possible air flight route to and from Cameron and the Grand Canyon. Whitmer was instrumental in securing the Hualapai Tribe’s exception of airspace into the Grand Canyon and the development of the Skywalk.

The draft resolution is expected to be finalized and approved at the committee’s next regular meeting. After its approval, the resolution would proceed to the Intergovernmental Relations Committee and to the Office of the President for concurrence, and then submitted to Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior.

Council Delegate Jack Colorado (Cameron/Coppermine) thanked Vice President Shelly for his help.

“The Vice President was willing to work with the Cameron Chapter,” Colorado said. “He has done a lot to help the Cameron Chapter. His work has gone this far.”

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