



NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE  
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT  
RUSSELL BEGAYE | JONATHAN NEZ

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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October 9, 2015

**BEGAYE APPLAUDS NEW MEXICO DELEGATION CALL FOR PROMPT ACTION ON  
NAVAJO EMERGENCY DECLARATION REQUEST**

WINDOW ROCK – President Russell Begaye today applauded members of the New Mexico congressional delegation for asking the White House to act on the Navajo Nation’s formal request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine spill. In a letter sent to President Barack Obama yesterday, Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and Representatives Steve Pearce, Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham urged the president to take prompt action on the Navajo Nation’s request.

“I applaud Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and Representatives Steve Pearce, Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham for calling for prompt action on our request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine Spill. This disaster has culturally and economically devastated our Nation and inflicted an enormous amount of pain and suffering on our people.

“We need greater support from the Obama Administration to address the crisis and protect the livelihood of our farmers. We hope that President Obama will listen to the bipartisan calls from members of the Arizona and New Mexico delegations to act quickly on our Emergency Declaration request.”

Earlier this week, Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake sent a separate letter to President Obama asking for a swift review of the Navajo Nation’s request.

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Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

October 8, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We respectfully request that you take prompt action on Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye's request for an emergency declaration as a result of the Gold King Mine spill accident that occurred on August 5, 2015.

The mine spill released more than three million gallons of toxic waste that flowed into the Animas and San Juan Rivers. The San Juan River runs along the northern border of the Navajo Nation for approximately 250 miles. The toxic contaminants directly impacted 13 Navajo Chapters and serious concerns remain about the long-term public health and economic challenges caused by this extremely serious spill.

Recovering from this incident will require a full and coordinated approach. Given the complexity of this disaster, we request a thorough response to the Navajo Nation's request for a Presidential emergency declaration. We would further request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency provide adequate technical assistance for tribal officials to identify all available federal assistance to effectively respond to this emergency and to protect the Navajo Nation's public health and safety.

Native communities deserve full and complete protection of their water, land, and livelihoods. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Steve Pearce  
United States Representative



Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Representative



Michelle Lujan Grisham  
United States Representative