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THE NAVAJO NATION

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Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., issues executive order prohibiting discussions with uranium mining companies

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Citing the seven-month-old Diné Natural Resources Protection Act, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., has issued an executive order directing tribal employees to cease providing information to companies that continue to seek to mine uranium within the Navajo Nation.

On Nov. 4, the President signed Executive Order 02-2005 which became effective today with the concurrence of Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie.

The President said the executive order is necessary because it has come to his attention that some uranium mining companies are willfully disrespecting Navajo law and making inquiries of tribal divisions.

“It is the law of the Navajo Nation to prohibit any such uranium mining or processing on any sites within Navajo Indian Country,” he states in the order.

The order directs the executive directors of the Division of Natural Resources, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency and the Office of the Navajo Tax Commission to take several actions. Among them are to:

1. Provide the Navajo Attorney General with a written statement that indicates whether any staff members have communicated with representatives of a uranium mining or processing company within the last year in the course of their jobs.
2. Provide a summary of any communication that occurred.
3. Notify the division’s employees that all communications with uranium company representatives must cease until the employee communicating with the company has received guidance from Navajo Nation Department of Justice.

The Diné Natural Resources Protection Act was passed by the Navajo Nation Council on April 19, 2005. Part of its purpose is to “ensure that no further damage to the culture, society and economy of the Navajo Nation occurs because of uranium mining within the Navajo Nation and Navajo Indian Country and that no further damage to the culture, society and economy of the Navajo Nation occurs because of uranium processing.”

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As part of the findings of the law, the executive order notes, the Navajo Nation Council found that “the Fundamental Laws of the Diné, *Diné Bi Beenahaz annii*, support preserving and protecting the Navajo Nation’s natural resources, especially the four sacred elements of life – air, light/fire, water and earth/pollen.”

These resources are the foundation of the Navajo people’s spiritual ceremonies and the Diné way of life. It is the duty and responsibility of the Diné to protect and preserve the natural world for future generations.

The Navajo Nation Council found that the mining and processing of uranium ore on the Navajo Nation and in Navajo Indian Country since the mid-1940s has created substantial and irreparable economic detriments to the Nation and its people, the law states.

The Resources Protection Act states that “no person shall engage in uranium mining and uranium processing on any sites within Navajo Indian Country.”

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