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## **Speaker Morgan encourages Navajos to connect to the Four Sacred Mountains**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - Navajo Nation Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) encourages the Navajo people to connect to their spiritual Four Sacred Mountains that define the Navajo Nation boundaries in the four directions by visiting each of the mountains.

The Navajo Sacred Mountains are; Mount Blanca of the eastern direction also known as Tsisnaasjini' – “White Shell Mountain” near Alamosa in the San Luis Valley, Colo.; Mountain Taylor of the southern direction as known as Tsoodzil – “Turquoise” that is located north of Laguna, N.M.; the San Francisco Peaks also known as Doko'oosliid – “Abalone Shell Mountain,” of the western direction near Flagstaff, Ariz. and Mountain Hesperus of the northern direction also known as Dibe' Nltsaa – Obsidian Mountain, the sacred mountain north of the La Plata Mountains, Colo.

Being connecting to the Navajo sacred mountains is central to the Navajo worldview, according to Speaker Morgan who traveled to Prescott, Ariz.; Phoenix and San Francisco in an effort to help defend the sacredness of the San Francisco Peaks in the federal court system.

Speaker Morgan said he along with staff members, council delegates and members of the judicial committee traveled to support and advocate for the Navajo reverence for the San Francisco Peaks.

“The Navajo Nation did a good job in providing education.”

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He said Monday's federal appeals court decision is excellent for all 13 Southwest tribes in the region that the use of reclaimed water to make artificial snow on the San Francisco Peaks violates the Native American tribes' religious freedom.

Each tribe consider the San Francisco Peaks a sacred place since the beginning of mankind. Each sacred mountain is home to spirits, medicinal herbs and a healing place.

Judge Fletcher of the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a January 2006 ruling by District Court Judge Paul G. Rosenblatt. Arguments were presented during mid-September of last year.

The tribes who successfully fought in court illustrated to Judge Fletcher that using reclaimed water for artificial snow at the Arizona Snowbowl Ski Resort would pollute the San Francisco Peaks.

The tribes successfully educated Judge Fletcher that the mountain would become polluted, and, ultimately, violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Furthermore, the use of the reclaim water would also violate the Final Environmental Impact Statement that doesn't comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.

"Take the time to visit them and do your offering," Speaker Morgan said. "Know the sacred places, I realize we are losing touch with the Sacred Mountains. It is crucial that we develop a real awareness of our spiritual connection to the Four Sacred Mountains as Navajos."

Speaker Morgan said that when we clearly recognize this reality, and ground ourselves in visiting the Four Sacred Mountains, we are compelled to have reverence for the Navajo way-of-life.