



**The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Navajo Hopi Land Commission passes resolution for possible residential development at Turquoise Ranch**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Last week, the Navajo Hopi Land Commission passed a resolution for the investigation and consideration of converting parcels of land at Turquoise Ranch, which is located west of Winslow, Ariz., into trust status for the benefit of Navajo relocatees. The commission passed the resolution, 7-0.

“We are acquiring land off of Interstate 40,” Roman Bitsuie, executive director for the Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office, said, adding that the parcels of land, which range in different sizes, total up to 373 acres. “The land is immediately west of Winslow and is being identified for residential development.”

Honorable Raymond Maxx (Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi), a member of the commission, said the parcels of land are economically feasible for residential development because “of the existence of an exit ramp and availability of water for homes near the selected parcel sites.”

Passage of the resolution allows the Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office to request to the Office of Hopi Navajo Indian Relocation (OHNIR) to review the selected parcels of land. The review would include a report consisting of an appraisal, title search, Level 1 Environmental Audit, legal survey, water supply and water evaluation and other reviews or analysis of lands, before acquisition occurs.

The identified land consists of three parcels that are 40 acres each and one parcel 253 acres, totaling 373 acres for residential development.

Pursuant to the Navajo Hopi Settlement Act Amendments of 1980, the Navajo Hopi Land Commission is delegated authority through Navajo Nation Council Resolution CN-69-80 to act and speak for the Navajo Nation “with respect to land selection and land exchange provisions.”

In order for residential development to occur, the parcels of identified land need to be requested by the Navajo Hopi Land Commission through resolution to OHNIR, who administers the Navajo Hopi Settlement Act, for acquisition. Thereafter, OHNIR may act on the resolution and will have fulfilled its obligation of the Navajo Hopi Settlement Act by consulting with the Navajo Nation for conveying those lands into trust status.

Normally, the U.S. Secretary of Interior would act according to his or her judgment in granting trust land to tribes. The Secretary will not have that authority, however, over the Navajo Hopi Land Commission’s request because land requests such as at Turquoise Ranch, for example, are mandatory under the Navajo Hopi Settlement Act.

According to the Act, the Navajo Nation cannot transfer more than 250,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management Lands and it cannot exceed 150,000 acres in private lands into trust. These lands also need to be located 18 miles from the present Navajo Nation boundaries, in order to be transferred into Navajo Nation trust land. Turquoise Ranch is located 18 miles from the Navajo Nation.

In Arizona, approximately 13,300 acres of land remain available for selection and acquisition into Navajo Nation trust status.

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The type of lands the Navajo Hopi Land Commission recommends for selection are: lands with economic development potential, including potential to provide sustainable income to Navajo relocatee beneficiaries, and lands that “address special needs of the beneficiaries and affected communities including but not limited to the preservation of cultural resources, control of liquor establishments” and land as home sites for those who have been displaced from their first relocation sites.

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