



Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program Receives Coveted Award Recognizing Superior Audit & Investigative Performance

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Demonstrating excellence in audit and investigative activities to ensure the collection of every dollar due to the Navajo Nation.

That's how the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR), described the Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program, which is a program under the Minerals Department that was created to conduct audits and investigations of financial obligations due to the Navajo Nation under mineral leases located on tribal trust lands.



Greg Gould, Director of the Office of Natural Resources (ONRR) – an agency with the U.S. Department of Interior presents Joan Kilgore Award to Rowena Cheromiah, Principal Investigator at the Navajo Nation Minerals Department.



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In recognition for the Navajo Nation's outstanding audit and investigative performance, ONRR awarded the Navajo Nation with the Joan Kilgore Award. The Joan Kilgore Award is named in honor of Joan Kilgore, who was a staunch advocate for Indian royalty issues. ONRR based the award on the Navajo Nation's active participation in royalty collection and compliance activities and contributions to ongoing initiatives undertaken in partnership with ONRR.

ONRR Director Greg Gould stated, "We congratulate the Navajo Nation for working closely with ONRR and for developing a strong and robust royalty compliance program." He added, "In testament to your professionalism and commitment to excellence, the Navajo Nation received a top ranking on the 2014 peer review."

The peer review was conducted late in 2013 by Williams, Adley & Company, a CPA firm based in Washington, D.C. The peer review examined audits performed by the Navajo Nation's Minerals Audit Program. Under the peer review process, an audit organization can receive a rating of pass, pass with deficiencies or fail. The Navajo Nation's Minerals Audit Program received a rating of pass, which is the *highest* rating that can be received.

ONRR Director Greg Gould noted the Navajo Nation also received a top ranking in the annual attestation engagement, adding that the Navajo Nation "has demonstrated a commitment to excellence and a spirit of cooperation that is critical to the success of ONRR."

Erik Tsosie, a Senior Minerals Auditor with the Navajo Nation, described the dedication of the audit program's staff, "We often come to work early, and leave late in the evening." He added, "Auditing is hard work, but we are dedicated to verifying that the extractive industries on the Navajo Nation fully comply with all federal laws, regulations, and lease terms, and pay what they are required to pay to the Navajo Nation."

In closing, ONRR Director Greg Gould thanked the Navajo Nation for the tribe's efforts to ensure that the Navajo Nation receives the full return of royalties due. He added, "The Navajo Nation is truly a leader among ONRR's state and tribal partners."



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Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources Executive Director Bidtah Becker, stated, “I would like to congratulate all the Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program staff for their steadfast dedication and commitment. As a result of their efforts, the Navajo Nation has one of the best royalty compliance programs in the country. Their work truly benefits the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation.”

Navajo Nation Minerals Department Director Akhtar Zaman, emphasized the importance of the audit function, which provides assurance to the Navajo Nation about the accuracy of revenues derived from the tribe’s vast mineral resources.

According to Zaman, the Navajo Nation is one of only a handful of tribes across the United States that performs its own audits of royalties and other financial obligations derived from mineral leases. He explained, “It’s a testament to the Navajo Nation’s resolve for self-determination and control over its mineral producing assets.”

In support of continued collaboration between the Navajo Nation and ONRR, Brian Bex, a Minerals Auditor with the Navajo Nation, will be joining ONRR for a two-year period under the agency’s Intergovernmental Personnel Act Fellowship Program. Participants in the program develop additional audit and compliance experience and gain special knowledge related to minerals asset valuation and enforcement.

The origin of the Navajo Nation’s Minerals Audit Program can be traced to the Federal Oil and Gas Royalty Management Act of 1982. Sections 202 and 205 of the Act provides the authority for tribes and states to enter into cooperative agreements or delegations with the Secretary of the Interior to conduct audits and investigations of mineral leases.

The Navajo Nation entered into its first cooperative agreement in 1984. The Navajo Nation is one of a small number of tribes and states that are currently performing audits and compliance reviews under agreements with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Natural Resources Revenue.

The Minerals Audit Program is led by Rowena Cheromiah who is the Principal Investigator under the cooperative agreement and Marlene Nakai, Minerals Audit Manager. Both have provided decades of service to the Navajo Nation in support of the tribe’s minerals management function through audit and compliance related activities.



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The Navajo Nation Minerals Audit Program performs audit and investigation of mineral royalty payments and other lease-level obligations to the Navajo Nation including bonuses, water usage fees, scholarship payments, and all other financial obligations that are specifically required under Navajo Nation oil, gas, and solid minerals leases and agreements.

The audits are performed in accordance with the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards promulgated by the Comptroller General of the United States.