



THE NAVAJO NATION

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## **NAVAJO NATION IS APPALLED BY U.S. EPA DECISION NOT TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOLD KING MINE SPILL**

WINDOW ROCK-The Navajo Nation learned late Friday afternoon that the U.S. EPA is reneging on its promise to accept responsibility for the 2015 Gold King Mine spill, rejecting the Nation's claim for damages arising out of the catastrophic event. This decision comes after the EPA represented for months that it would accept full responsibility for the spill and make all impacted people whole.

The Navajo Nation, however, is not going to sit by while the federal government fails to fulfill its legal and moral obligations. All claims rejected by the EPA will be included the tribe's pending lawsuit.

"The U.S. EPA poisoned our water and now are turning their backs," said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. "We are angered and appalled by this, but we will fight for what is right for the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation. It is unconscionable that our farmers have been waiting nearly a year and a half for this negative decision. There is no reason our families on the front line of this spill should have to tighten their belts while the federal agencies responsible proceed along unaffected by their own actions. We plan to work with this Congress and the next administration to bring justice and accountability for our Navajo people."

"This denial is but one more denial of justice for the Navajo Nation and its people," said Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch. "Unfortunately, this is consistent with a long history of neglect and disregard for our well-being. However, we will not give up. I have instructed our outside lawyers at Hueston Hennigan to add these damages to our existing lawsuit. I am also extremely disappointed in the timing of the announcement. This was announced nearly one and a half years since the EPA triggered this spill, but only six days before the EPA political officials leave their posts."

John Hueston, the Navajo Nation's outside counsel added, "We hoped the U.S. EPA would voluntarily do the right thing, but now we will ask a court of law to see that it does. Either way, we intend to hold the U.S. EPA and others accountable for their actions."

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