



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:  
Jared Touchin, Communications Director  
(928) 274-4275

Crystalayne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 274-2758

[nnopvp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnopvp.communications@gmail.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 13, 2022

## President Nez and RDC Chairman advocate for the removal of uranium mine waste in meeting with the head of the U.S. EPA

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Council Delegate Rickie Nez met with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael S. Regan and Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe, to advocate for the cleanup and remediation of radioactive waste from hundreds of abandoned uranium mine sites location on the Navajo Nation. Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency Executive Director Valinda Shirley, and Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Lashawna Tso were also part of the discussion.



**Photo: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, U.S. EPA Administrator Michael Regan, and Council Delegate Rickie Nez in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 13, 2022.**

On the Navajo Nation, there are approximately 524 abandoned uranium mine sites and only 219 have available funds for clean-up and remediation efforts, leaving a total of 305 unaddressed sites. Approximately 30 million tons of uranium ore were extracted from Navajo lands by the federal government from 1944 to 1986 to support nuclear activities including the Manhattan Project, World War II, and the Cold War. Exposure to uranium mining and abandoned mine sites has led to devastating environmental and health impacts and losses of life for many Navajo people since.

“Our Navajo people have experienced so much heartache and devastation caused by the federal government’s uranium mining activities, but progress is being made in the cleanup efforts throughout partnerships with Administrator Regan and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. There is much work yet to be done and that’s why it’s important that we continue to meet with our federal partners. We appreciate the Biden-Harris Administration for their commitment to working together with the Navajo Nation on many important issues,” said President Nez.

In September 2021, President Nez welcomed Administrator Regan to Cameron, Ariz., located on the Navajo Nation, to meet with local officials and to visit an abandoned uranium mine site that is located only a few feet away from occupied homes. In April, President Nez also welcomed the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to the Redwater Pond Road Community, located within the Church Rock Chapter on the Navajo Nation, to hear firsthand accounts from local Navajo residents about the devastating impacts caused by uranium mining.

During Tuesday's meeting, Administrator Regan highlighted some of the progress being made and announced that the federal EPA is working to create field offices located in the capital of the Navajo Nation and Flagstaff, Ariz. dedicated to working with the Navajo Nation EPA. The Federal EPA also reported that they are working with the U.S. Department of Energy and the Navajo Nation to conduct assessments and are prioritizing the 300 plus unfunded abandoned uranium mine sites.



**Photo: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez speaking with U.S. EPA Administrator Michael Regan in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 13, 2022.**

Council Delegate Rickie Nez, who serves as the chair of the Resources and Development Committee, called on the federal EPA to cleanup uranium sites on the Navajo Nation as quickly as possible to lessen the risks and protect future generations from health impacts. He stated that Indigenous people have contributed in many ways to the United States, yet the Navajo people continue to wait for the remediation of abandoned uranium mines.

“By working together with the Biden-Harris Administration over the last couple of years, we have built a lot of momentum on many issues including the cleanup of uranium waste. Progress is in the works and we will begin to see more mines addressed in our communities. I thank Administrator Regan and his team, Chairman Rickie Nez, and the Navajo Nation EPA and Washington Office for continuing to advocate for our people,” added President Nez.

###

For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.