

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 7, 2014

CONTACT

Mark Howell

howellstrategic@earthlink.net

202-347-5720, office

202-805-5359, cell

Northern Arapaho Leaders Slam Draft Bill

WIND RIVER RESERVATION, Wyo.—Northern Arapaho leaders Monday condemned draft legislation they say would terminate a portion of the Wind River Reservation.

The Northern Arapaho Business Council issued the critique in comments solicited on short notice by Wyoming's congressional delegation, which is backing the draft bill.

In a sharply worded letter, the Northern Arapaho Business Council insisted the draft bill smacks of long-discarded federal termination and assimilation policies that represent a blemish on U.S. history and harmed generations of Native Americans.

"The bill you have put forward resurrects policies discredited and abandoned long ago by the United States," according to the letter, which is signed by all six members of the Northern Arapaho Tribe's elected leadership.

The draft bill is a response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's decision to treat the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes as a state under the Clean Air Act. A detailed legal analysis in the EPA decision concluded that the town of Riverton is part of the Wind River Reservation. A separate opinion by the Department of Interior reached a similar conclusion. The draft bill aims to undermine the decisions by changing federal law.

Northern Arapaho Business Council members, in their letter, suggested that the delegation and Wyoming state leaders are uninformed about the law and issues related to the reservation boundary decisions.

"We strongly suspect that people who support this bill have not taken the time to read the DOI and EPA decisions, study the law, or appreciate the history," the Council members said in their letter.

Meanwhile, a companion letter issued Monday by tribal attorneys accuses the delegation and state leaders of ignoring Wyoming Supreme Court precedent in the *Big Horn* water litigation that directly undermines the state's position. It also accuses state officials, including Gov. Matt Mead, of flip-flopping on the role of an Environmental Protection Agency decision in the ongoing controversy, and provides documents to support the allegation.

"Also enclosed are an article and portions of transcripts which demonstrate how lawyers for the State of Wyoming previously promoted the Treatment As a State process as providing an appropriate forum to resolve the competing views of the Wind River Indian Reservation boundary," tribal attorney Andrew W. Baldwin wrote in the letter.