



Joint Press Release

Navajo Nation Office
of the President and the Vice President
and Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 8, 2016

Jared Touchin (OOS) 928-221-9253
Mihio Manus (OPVP) 928-871-7000

Navajo Nation concerned over Hopi settlement agreement with the City of Flagstaff

WINDOW ROCK – The Navajo Nation is greatly concerned over the Hopi Tribe’s proposed settlement agreement with the City of Flagstaff over the use of reclaimed wastewater to make artificial snow for the Arizona Snowbowl.

The City of Flagstaff has shown a lack of consultation and responsibility to consult with the 12 Indigenous Nations that consider San Francisco Peaks as a sacred mountain. There was no transparency involving the 12 impacted Indigenous Nations.

According to the settlement agreement the city will be treating the wastewater with an earthen filtration system, which uses natural materials to improve the water quality. The city will be building and implementing the filtration system by winter 2017-2018.

Executive director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Leonard Gorman stated, “Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission is one of the Navajo agencies directed to protect San Francisco Peak as a sacred mountain. The Commission is working with a number of Indigenous Nations presenting to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. These nations include San Carlos Apache, Havasupai, and others advancing the position that using reclaimed wastewater is a violation of Navajo people’s belief.”

The Hopi Tribal Council approved the settlement agreement on Feb. 24. The Flagstaff City Council is scheduled to consider the settlement on Tuesday evening.

Council Delegate Jonathan Hale, who sits on the Navajo Nation Council’s Naabik’íyáti’ Sacred Sites Task Force, voiced his concern over the agreement between the city of Flagstaff and the Hopi Tribe. He said that the Navajo Nation should have been consulted regarding any agreements that other Indian Nations may consider with the city of Flagstaff.

“The agreement was that Flagstaff would be transparent with all Indian tribes involved with the wastewater issue and should have a say regarding the protection of the sacred San Francisco Peaks. The implementation of a wastewater filtration system was never proposed to the Navajo Nation or any other tribe, and we must remind Flagstaff that one tribe does not speak for all tribes who regard the San Francisco Peaks as a sacred area,” said Delegate Hale.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez said the Nation must continue to protect its sacred sites.

"The Navajo Nation remains opposed against reclaimed wastewater for the purposes of creating artificial snow on the San Francisco Peaks," said Vice President Jonathan Nez.

Dook'o'osłííd is one of the Four Sacred Mountains of the Navajo Nation, he said, noting that the United Nations Rapporteur visited last summer to advocate for its protection.

In July 2010, the Navajo Nation Council passed a resolution that officially opposed the use of wastewater for snow production at the Arizona Snowbowl. The resolution also authorizes the Nation's leaders to oppose the use of wastewater at the sacred site.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Council Delegate Otto Tso, both members of the Sacred Sites Task Force, said the Council would continue to oppose the use of the wastewater and called for the City of Flagstaff to consult with the Navajo Nation.

"I believe the settlement is only benefitting the two parties and neighboring tribes should've at least have had the opportunity to be informed," said Delegate Tso. "This would have opened the doors to a better government-to-government dialogue and relationship between the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, other Arizona tribes and the City of Flagstaff.

###