



25th Navajo Nation Council

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Resources and Development Committee conducts site tour to focus on reclamation, asset security, and community development**



**Resources and Development Committee and local community members visit an open mine during a recent site tour of the Black Mesa and Kayenta mines.**

**BLACK MESA, Ariz.** – Members of the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) visited the Black Mesa and Kayenta mines to inspect reclamation efforts, accompanied by representatives from the Division of Natural Resources, Department of Minerals, Peabody Western Coal Company, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Joined by Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) Vice-Chair Germaine Simonson, the committee met with local community members to ensure that post-mining land restoration aligns with the needs and expectations of the community.

“Ensuring that our water, land, and resources are effectively reclaimed and repurposed is critical not only for environmental health but for the future prosperity of our people,” said Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson. “Our goal is to restore the natural balance as much as possible, preserve its cultural importance, and create economic foundations that benefit all communities within the Navajo Nation.”

Community members voiced strong concerns over the impact of mining on aquifers and stressed the need for comprehensive reclamation of both shallow and deep aquifers, vital water resources for the area.

“We’re focused on ensuring that Navajo lands are undergoing quality reclamation”, said Delegate Shawna Ann Claw. “Listening to community concerns was vital, and we’re taking key steps forward. We’ll meet with the asset inventory, water, and roads committees and coordinate with the BIA to ensure that land reversion after phase three aligns with compliance standards. This visit also allowed us to explore potential economic uses for these facilities, including partnerships with local nonprofit organizations. We’ll present a detailed report at the upcoming RDC meeting.”

The visit to Black Mesa and Kayenta mines is a proactive step in the RDC’s ongoing efforts to oversee the reclamation process, including reviewing compliance standards and exploring opportunities for economic development. Inspections will help determine if any existing infrastructure can be repurposed for community benefit, either through economic initiatives or collaboration with local nonprofits.

“It’s our responsibility as the Navajo Nation government and various divisions to ensure reclamation meets community standards.” Germaine Simonson added, “These communities will continue to live here after coal mining, and their concerns must be our priority. The damage to aquifers is a major issue raised by residents, and we’re committed to addressing these concerns. Reclamation must be handled carefully, and we’ll hold the company accountable to meet these expectations.”

The Resource and Development Committee is preparing to hold a government-to-government leadership meeting on December 3rd. This meeting will bring together key stakeholders, including the BIA, Peabody Energy, the Department of Minerals, Department of Natural Resources, and other involved agencies, to ensure the successful reclamation and future use of Black Mesa resources.

RDC has outlined steps, including convening with Peabody’s asset inventory, water, and roads committees to refine reclamation strategies, collaborating with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to ensure compliance with land reversion standards post-phase three, to be discussed during an upcoming regular committee meeting.

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