



Shiprock Chapter Government of the Navajo Nation

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Scott Pruitt
Director
Environment Protection Authority
Washington, DC

Greetings Mr. Pruitt,

The Shiprock community area farmers and ranchers are greatly encouraged by your announcement that the compensation claims for damages from the Gold King Mine spill of August 2015 will be reconsidered. The Shiprock area Navajo communities have long been traditional farming communities. As we received the brunt end of the devastation with the mine spill catastrophe, our farming families were thrust into a time of anguish, uncertainty and economic hardship and the damage is long term, if not permanent. Our people, particularly our elderly remain traumatized, our cultural and spiritual realisms have been greatly impacted. We are close to the land and water; our farming pursuits is more than a livelihood.

In the midst of the turmoil in the aftermath of the spill, the Shiprock Chapter took positions on several issues that were not aligned with the central Navajo Nation government leadership. One significant issue we had great concern on, was the prospect of a law suit against the USEPA. I gave the following statement at the time that was reported in area newspapers, "It is ludicrous to think that as farmers who have lost so much economically, culturally and spiritually that we would have confidence in the tedious and iffy options presented by the AG (Navajo Attorney General). We believe a great opportunity was lost with the arbitrary reaction of threatening a law suit at the heat of the moment when Director McCarthy admitted guilt and made commitments to make it right. The Navajo leadership could have brought EPA to the table to hammer out an agreement compelling EPA to 'make things right' including compensation. We feel we have been left behind by the tribal government; filing compensation claims after filing a lawsuit is like trying to retrieve a bucket of water that's already gone down river."

Perhaps for these reasons the claims of our private farmers and the claim submitted by the Shiprock Chapter were not honored and included in the Navajo Nation Tort Claims filing. We the local farmers and communities have been left to fend for ourselves. Therefore we humbly appeal to you to allow the Shiprock Chapter and our area farmers to renew our claims.

Respectfully,

Duane Yazzie, Chapter President
Shiprock Chapter of the Navajo Nation

CHAPTER OFFICERS

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