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# Press Release: The Hopi Tribe

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## Hopi in Support of Sacred Zuni Salt Lake

**Kykotsmovi, Arizona--** In the atmosphere of pueblo warmth and welcome, the Hopi Tribe hosted Zuni Governor Malcom B. Bowekakty and Zuni Councilmen to discuss concerns pertinent to the Zuni Salt Lake and other cultural resources.

"It is imperative that representatives of the Zuni Tribe meet with you to provide our reasoning and justifications for the positions we have taken with respect to the Salt River Project's proposed establishment of a coal surface mine near one of our most significant sacred sites, the Zuni Salt Lake," explained Governor Bowekakty in his communication to the Hopi Tribe.

The Zuni Salt Lake is located on Bureau of Land Management lands approximately nine miles southwest of the proposed SRP Fence Lake Coal Mine in Catron County, New Mexico. Federal mining laws require the Secretary of Interior to approve, conditionally approve or disapprove life-of-mining plans because of the recovery of coal from federal lands.

At stake is the potential destruction or disturbance to salt pilgrimage trails within the proposed mine area, burial sites, and the Salt Lake itself.

"The Zuni concern over the Salt Lake is also an important concern for the Hopi people. As pueblo neighbors, we share important cultural properties crucial to sustaining our spiritual and cultural ways of life. We therefore welcome you to the Hopi mesas to discuss these important issues and to seek ways to protect these cultural properties," stated Chairman Wayne Taylor in his opening address to the delegation.

In attendance were the Hopi Tribe's Land Team and Vice Chairman Phillip Quochoytewa, who also expressed concern over the potential harm to traditional cultural properties.

"We empathize with Zuni cultural issues. We understand the significance of the Salt Lake not only to our Zuni brothers and sisters, but to the Hopi people as well. We are equally aware that once a cultural property has been destroyed, it can never be recovered or replaced. This, in itself, can have a devastating and long lasting effect on the tribe," said Lenora Lewis, Chairperson of the Hopi Tribe's Land Team.

The All Indian Pueblo Council of New Mexico also expressed a halt to the proposed mine. The Zuni Tribe has exhausted all administrative options and remedies to stop the issuance of a Life of Mine permit to SRP's proposed Fence Lake Coal mining. The matter is now before Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt.



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