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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BEGAYE CALLS FOR INCREASED FEDERAL SUPPORT IN TESTIMONY BEFORE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

WASHINGTON-President Russell Begaye today called for increased support from the Federal Government to address the recent Gold King Mine spill in testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. President Begaye also discussed the failed response from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to the crisis.

“In light of the devastating impacts from this spill, both known and yet unknown, we need to act quickly and thoughtfully to protect our Navajo citizens, our natural resources, the Navajo way of life, and most importantly our future generations,” testified President Begaye. “We need assistance from the responsible parties to address the short- and long-term impacts, to make us whole, and to return the beauty and *hozho* to our River and our people. In addition to oversight and national attention, Congress can provide forward-thinking legislative solutions to some of these issues.”

To address the serious impacts of this spill and the continued threat to the Navajo people from future contamination, President Begaye made the following requests of Congress:

- Resources from USEPA, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to address the immediate emergency;
- Assurances that USEPA will fairly and timely compensate the affected farmers and livestock owners for their damages, both in the near term and long term.
- Resources to conduct our own water, sediment, and soil monitoring, and recognized authority for the Navajo Nation EPA to do the necessary work.
- That the USEPA address all the contamination that is flowing into the River.

- Resources to address near- and intermediate-term environmental and health impacts;
- Resources to study and address the long-term environmental and health impacts of the spill, and to restore the River to a safe and healthy state; and
- A fair and independent assessment of the role USEPA, and others, played in the events leading up to the Gold King Mine spill, and the establishment of a different lead agency.

President Begaye strongly criticized USEPA's response to the spill and its complete lack of transparency.

"It took the USEPA almost two full days to notify us of the spill. We view this as a violation of the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and the Navajo Nation," testified President Begaye.

Tomorrow, President Begaye will testify before a joint hearing of the U.S. House Natural Resources and Oversight and Government Reform Committees.

*CLICK HERE FOR FULL TESTIMONY*

<http://www.indian.senate.gov/sites/default/files/9.16.15%20Begaye%20Testimony%20.pdf/>

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