



## The 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

Date: November 11, 2025

(For Federal Register Submission: NPL Grazing Permits)\*\*

### VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Office of Regulatory Affairs & Collaborative Action

RE: Comments on Agency Information Collection Activities; Navajo Partitioned Land Grazing Permits (Federal Register Notice)

Dear Department Officials:

On behalf of the Navajo Nation and the communities I represent, I respectfully submit the following comments in response to the Federal Register Notice titled “Agency Information Collection Activities; Navajo Partitioned Land Grazing Permits.”

These comments reflect deep concerns about the process, scope, and implications of this information collection action, particularly during the ongoing dissolution of the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR) and the transfer of related duties to the Department of the Interior.

#### 1. Lack of Tribal Consultation Violates Federal Policy

The Navajo Nation was not afforded formal consultation before issuing this notice.

Executive Order 13175, the DOI Tribal Consultation Policy, and the federal trust responsibility all require meaningful consultation prior to federal actions affecting tribal lands, grazing authority, or land management systems.

Given the sensitivity of Navajo Partitioned Lands and the historical impacts of the Navajo–Hopi Land Settlement Act, this omission is unacceptable.

#### Request:

Initiate formal, government-to-government consultation before any approval, implementation, or modification of NPL grazing information collection activities.

#### 2. Data Ownership and Sovereignty Must Be Protected

The notice indicates that:

- BIA collects the data

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- BIA and Navajo Nation staff conduct interviews
- BIA maintains the data
- BIA uses the data to determine eligibility

This violates Navajo data sovereignty principles and undermines self-determination.

The Navajo Nation must be a co-owner and primary custodian of all data collected on NPL, including:

- GPS mapping
- field interviews
- permit data
- compliance assessments

Request:

Establish a data-sharing and co-ownership agreement ensuring the Nation's full access to all raw data.

### 3. Federal Overreach into NPL Grazing Decisions Is a Significant Concern

The notice implies that BIA intends to remain the primary authority for:

- permit issuance
- permit modification
- grazing eligibility determination
- compliance enforcement

This is not acceptable without Navajo Nation concurrence.

Navajo Partitioned Lands are tribal lands; therefore, grazing decisions must reflect tribal laws, customs, and governance systems, not unilateral federal control.

Request:

Require Navajo Nation review and concurrence for all NPL grazing permit decisions.

### 4. ONHIR's Dissolution Raises Additional Risks

With ONHIR dissolving between 2025–2026, it is unclear how:

- relocatee grazing assignments
- relocation-related land determinations
- ONHIR grazing histories
- pending land-use decisions

... will be integrated into this new BIA information collection system.

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### Request:

Suspend changes to NPL grazing permit systems until the ONHIR transition plan is completed and shared publicly.

### 5. Impacts to ONHIR Relocatees Must Be Prevented

Many Navajo relocatees have grazing rights directly tied to ONHIR's determinations.

Changes in data systems or federal interpretations could unintentionally:

- alter historic grazing rights
- erase relocatee assignments
- create administrative barriers
- reduce compliance flexibility

### Request:

Guarantee that ONHIR-derived grazing assignments will not be modified, revoked, or reinterpreted under this information collection process.

### 6. Transparency and Reporting Requirements Needed

To ensure accountability, the Navajo Nation requests that BIA provide:

- Complete inventory of current NPL permits
- Number of pending applications
- Number of appeals
- Number of modifications
- Eligibility standards used
- Methodology for GPS and interview collection
- Data retention and correction protocols

### Conclusion

The Navajo Nation strongly urges the Department of the Interior to:

- pause implementation
- initiate formal tribal consultation
- enter into a data governance agreement
- ensure Nation-to-Nation decision-making
- protect relocatee rights
- prevent the unintended expansion of federal authority over NPL

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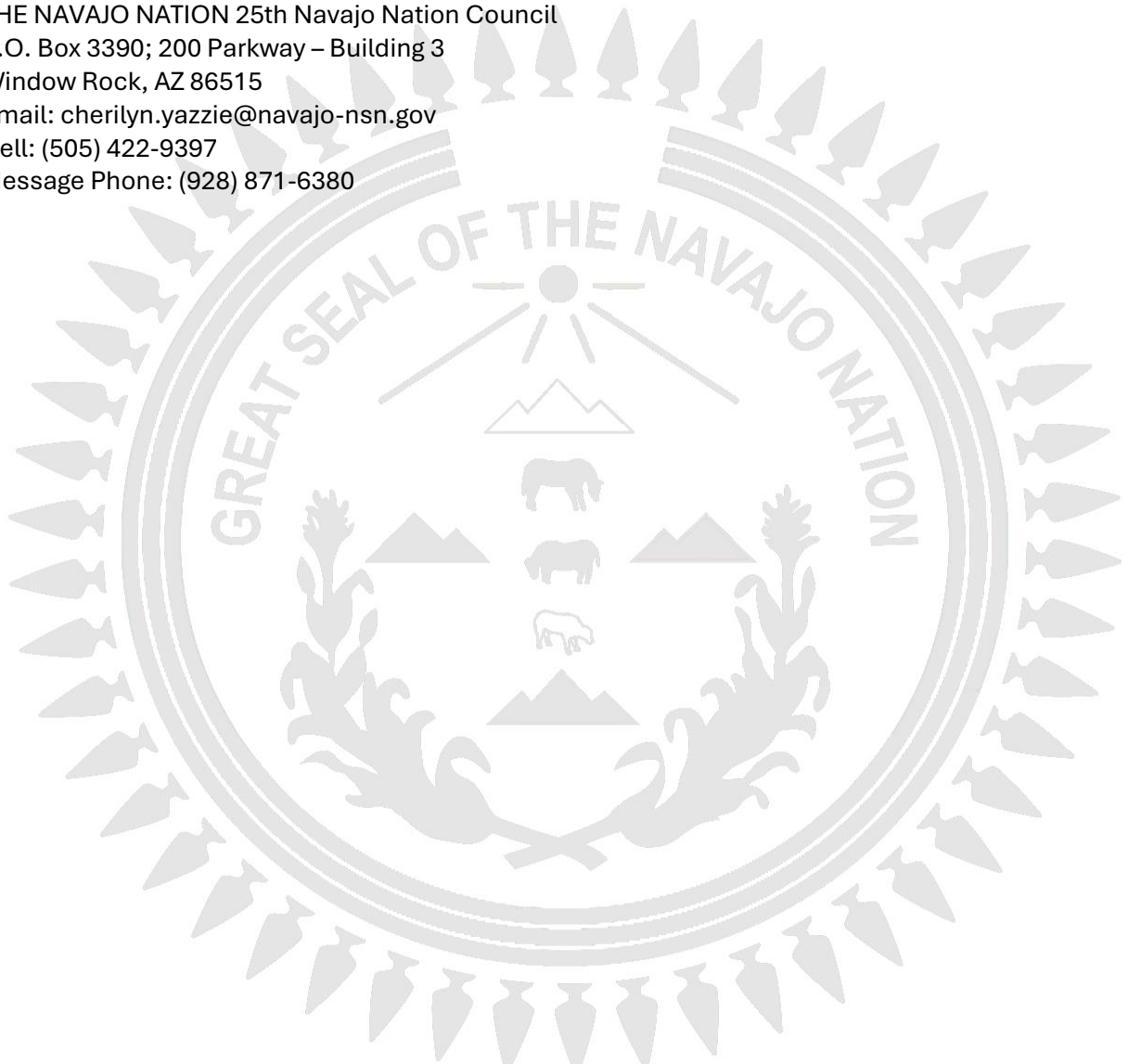
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The Navajo Nation expects continued communication and is prepared to work collaboratively to establish a lawful, culturally appropriate, and mutually respectful grazing permit system for Navajo Partitioned Lands.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Regards,

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