**Press Release**

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**Black Mesa Trust Applauds Decision to Shutter Navajo Generating Station**

(Kykotsmovi, Ariz.) Feb. 13, 2017 – “I am very happy and relieved that Black Mesa Trust’s struggle to save sacred waters on Black Mesa will finally end in 2019,” said Black Mesa Trust Executive Director Vernon Masayesva.

“Black Mesa Trust was founded in 1998 with the singular mission of saving drinking water stored deep under our sacred land. We will succeed, but the price for allowing industrial use of pristine drinking water has been unconscionably high,” he continued.

* Over 45 billion gallons of water stored in ancient aquifers is gone forever. This would have been enough water to sustain a Hopi population of 10,000 people for over 300 years, but it was gone in just 47 years.
* Many springs are now dry and an unknown number of others are contaminated. Some of the springs were used to conduct ceremonies.
* An unknown number of Hopi ancestral villages, burial sites, sacred shrines and petroglyphs have been destroyed. These were footprints of our ancestors who settled on Black Mesa over 1,000 years ago.
* Hundreds of acres of cedar trees have been uprooted by bulldozers. Cedars are used for purification and medicine.
* The dynamiting of coal seams has released an unknown quantity of methane gas. Coal fires may have been ignited and if so they are still burning, creating cave-like tunnels within the mesa.
* The extraction of billions of waters stored in highly-pressurized aquifers has caused thousands of sinkholes in the landscape.
* Impacts on the health of Diné (Navajo people) living downwind from the mine area and their livestock, their main source of livelihood, have never been objectively investigated.
* Nor has the impact of groundwater pumping on Siipapu, place of Emergence from the Third World to the Fourth World, located near the convergence of Little Colorado River and the main Colorado River been examined.
* Over 165 impoundment ponds built by the mining company have blocked the rainwater and snowmelt that used to flow through washes to Siipa’pu.
* Moencopi Wash, which once provided water for fields and crops, is bone dry most of the year. The impoundments were authorized by U.S. Army Corp of Engineers without full investigation of the environmental or cultural impacts or the possible effects on Moencopi farmers and endangered species. An investigation must be conducted and must include the outright sale of water leased from Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation to owners of Mohave Generating Station without the knowledge of the Hopi Tribe.

Now that Peabody Energy’s coal strip mining has ended, we begin a new chapter. It is time to begin healing the ecological-cultural landscape.

We must hold the federal government, Peabody, and owners of Navajo Generating Station, which includes U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, accountable for leaving us with a devastated landscape, the irretrievable loss of drinking water, compromised aquifers and the destruction of cultural sites and artifacts, not to mention desecration of our ancestors’ burial sites.

A full investigation and congressional hearing on the scope, extent and damages caused by coal mining on Black Mesa must be held.

The Hopi and Diné must work together to call for economic restitution. We deserve to be compensated for the economic benefit bestowed on millions of Arizona rate-payers and utility companies while Hopi and Diné are living in abject poverty. Arizona State University’s Morrison Institute conducted an economic impact study that shows Arizona reaped over a trillion dollars in benefits due to delivery of water from the Colorado River to Phoenix and Tucson through the 330-mile open canal called Central Arizona Project. Not a penny went to Hopi and Diné on whose backs this was done, even though it was coal and water from Black Mesa that powered Navajo Generating Station, which was built in part to pump water for the Central Arizona Project.

For Hopi people the healing process must begin. The modern Hopi Trial Council must take responsibility for approving the coal lease, which treated water like a commodity that could be negotiated, leased and sold in direct violation of ancient Hopi beliefs that water is life, therefore sacred.

We thank the many environmental, religious organizations and individuals who helped us achieve this victory.

We thank the founders and members of Black Mesa Trust, some of whom have joined the spirit world.

Black Mesa trust, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, has submitted a proposal to mitigate the impact of the loss of jobs and revenues generated by NGS and coal mining. It is available upon request to kuuyi@aol.com.

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