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Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. and Hopi Vice Chairman Todd Honyaoma today signed an historic Navajo-Hopi intergovernmental Compact, resolving a 40-year-old dispute over tribal land in northeastern Arizona.

"I am grateful to all the people who worked so hard over the years to resolve this dispute," Kempthorne said at the signing ceremony in Phoenix. "You have overcome a long history of bitterness and dispute. You truly have laid the foundation for a new relationship - one that will benefit all your people. You have made history."

The compact puts an end to the ban on construction in the Signing this historic Navajo-Hopi Intergovernmental Compact are, disputed area that was imposed by U.S. Commissioner of from left to right, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr., Interior Indian Affairs Robert Bennett in 1966. Commonly known as Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, and Hopi Vice Chairman Todd the "Bennett Freeze," this ban has greatly affected the use Honyaoma. of this land and has been a severe hindrance to the people who live there. Removing the freeze should greatly enhance the quality for life of tribal members in the area.

"The compact also recognizes the spiritual heritage of both tribes and ensures that religious traditions can continue while ensuring the conservation of eagles under federal law," Kempthorne said. Navajos will be allowed to enter Hopi land without a permit for traditional religious practices. In turn, Hopis will be allowed to enter Navajo land without a permit for such religious practices.

The agreement provides for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is part of the Interior Department, to study eagle populations in the disputed area and regulate the use of eagles depending on the size of the population.

The Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Nation, which have been in litigation since 1958 concerning ownership of nearly 10 million acres on their reservations in northeast Arizona, also have agreed to dismiss litigation, to release each other from claims, and to share funds collected for the use of parts of the disputed property that are held by the Interior Department.

Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie said the Compact ends an historic division between the tribes brought on by the Bennett Freeze. "This dispute is primarily a conflict over land because of the way the U.S. Government took the land and parceled it back out to the two tribes," he said. "This is a major agreement between the two tribes, because of the way they exercised sovereignty since 1868."

"We hope this is the beginning of a new era in Hopi-Navajo relations," said Cedric Kuwaninvaya, a member of the Hopi Tribal Council and chairman of the Hopi Land Team that negotiated the compact.

Other members of the Hopi Tribe participating in the ceremony included Davis Pecusa, vice-chairman of the Hopi Land Team; members Jack Harding Jr., Kingston Honahn Sr., Leon Koruh, and Alan Chaca; Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, director of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office; Clayton Honyumptewa, director, Office of Hopi Lands Administration; A. Scott Canty, general counsel, Hopi Tribe; and Wayne

Taylor Jr., former chairman.

Other members of the Navajo Nation attending included Navajo Deputy AG Harrison Tsosie and Former Navajo Nation President Peterson Zah, who helped to launch talks between the tribes in the 1990s. Also attending the signing were several members of the Navajo Land Commission, including Commission Chairman Lorenzo Bedonie, Commission Vice Chairman Lee Jack Sr., and Council Delegates Thomas Walker Jr., Leslie Dele, Raymond Maxx and Harry Williams Sr., Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi.

Federal and state representatives included Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona; Rep. Rick Renzi of Arizona; Terry Goddard, the attorney general of Arizona. In addition to Secretary Kempthorne, Interior was represented by Carl Artman, associate solicitor for Indian Affairs; Bureau of Indian Affairs Director Pat Ragsdale; BIA Director of Trusts Arch Wells; BIA Western Regional Director Allen Anspach; and BIA Navajo Regional Office Acting Director Omar Bradley.

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