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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
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Opening Statement By
The Honorable Don Young
Chairman, House Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee
Joint Oversight Hearing on

"Protecting Long-Term Tribal Energy Jobs and Keeping Arizona Water and Power Costs Affordable: The Current and Future Role of The Navajo Generating Station."
May 24, 2011

As Prepared for Delivery

Today's hearing will focus on the uncertain future of the Navajo Generating Station, a 2,250-megawatt coal-fired generation power plant, located on the Navajo Nation. I want to thank my colleagues from Arizona, Mr. Paul Gosar and Trent Franks, for requesting this important hearing.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates power plants on reservations, is endangering the survival of the Navajo Generating Station with absurd pollution controls. The costs and timeframes of such potential regulations regarding regional haze in the Grand Canyon could substantially increase power rates for customers or in a worst case scenario, close the plant. Shutting down the power plant would jeopardize jobs, tribal economies, and water rights for thousands of Native Americans in Arizona.

The Navajo Generating Station provides affordable power production for water and power customers in Arizona, California and Nevada. It is the eighth largest coal plant, in terms of output, in the nation. The plant, which became operational in 1976, provides the power necessary to move Arizona's allocation of the Colorado River to central and southern Arizona, through a water system called the Central Arizona Project. The importance of the Navajo Generating Station to the Central Arizona Project and its customers will be addressed by others testifying today. However, I would like to point out that the largest single customer of the Central Arizona Project water is the Gila River Indian Community.

As we all know, unemployment is high and rampant in most Indian communities. However, thanks to the Navajo Generating Station, hundreds of Native Americans are employed. In fact, the power plant employs 545 full-time works and over 80% are Native Americans. The Kayenta Mine, which supplies coal for the power plant, employs 415 full-time workers and over 90% are Native American. These high-paying jobs would be lost, should the plant close its doors.

I want to welcome our witnesses and especially thank the elected tribal officials who are here to testify about the potential economic and cultural damage the EPA's actions will have on your communities.