



The Navajo Nation
Yideeskáadi Nitsáhákees

DR. BUU NYGREN *PRESIDENT*
RICHELLE MONTOYA *VICE PRESIDENT*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 2, 2024

CONTACT: George Hardeen, Public Relations Director

Email: george.hardeen@navajo-nsn.gov

Cell: 928-810-9174

Navajo President Buu Nygren approves lease for \$700 million Horseshoe Bend Development, called model for Navajo tourism

'A model for Navajo Nation tourism, economic development'

LeCHEE, Ariz. – A \$700 million resort development project at one of the country's most popular tourist destinations got the green light from the Navajo Nation here Friday.

resort, conference space, restaurant, hiking and horseback trails, development space for other projects and the "crown jewel," a Diné Cultural Center.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed a business site lease agreement that now enables the Navajo-owned Horseshoe Bend Holdings, LLC, to seek investors to build a world-class resort on more than 421 acres overlooking Horseshoe Bend, Glen Canyon and the Colorado River 9.5 miles downstream of Lake Powell.

"This is what's it's all about, that Navajo is open for business," President Nygren said. "Navajo is open for economic development.

Not only will this promote our Navajo economy, it is going to promote our beautiful Navajo culture. It's a model for Navajo tourism."

Otis Manson, a Navajo entrepreneur who grew up here, said the development will feature a 300-room



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren joins Horseshoe Bend Holdings, LLC, partners Otis Manson and Chris Deschene of LeChee Chapter to break ground on the \$850 million Horseshoe Bend Resort after its business site lease was signed Sept. 27.

"As a child, I felt a deep connection to the Navajo people and the land we share," he said. "The spirit of entrepreneurship I nurtured was always about giving back, and this partnership with the Navajo Nation to develop Horseshoe Bend is the fulfillment of that vision."

Construction is expected to begin in about 18 months, he said. The project is expected to create around 1,000 construction jobs and 3,000 jobs when it's fully operational.

Once it opens, it's expected to generate \$14 million in lease revenue and taxes annually for the Navajo Nation.

In 2023, the National Park Service reported 787,465 visitors to the Horseshoe Bend Overlook. Between 2019 and 2023, the last year statistics are available, visitation to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area rose nearly 900,000 visitors, from 4,330,563 to 5,206,934.

The planned resort's location is fewer than nine miles from the world-renowned Antelope Canyon.

Both Horseshoe Bend and Antelope Canyon are in the geographic center of the Grand Circle, considered the largest concentration of national parks and monuments in the country.

The travel website Lonely Planet called the Grand Circle "the ultimate U.S. Southwest road trip."

It includes Grand Canyon National Park, Wupatki National Monument, the 125-year-old Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Sedona, Ariz., Peekaboo Slot Canyon near Kanab, Utah, Zion National Park, Monument Valley Tribal Park, Canyon de Chelly in the center of the Navajo Nation, Chaco Canyon National Historical Park in New Mexico, and

hundreds of miles of unequalled scenery in between.

Manson said a big motivator for him, his partners and his father Tom Manson, 76, was legacy.



"Horseshoe Bend holds a sacred place in the hearts of many," he said. "We intend to honor that."

He said as the Navajo people teach, *'Hózhó náhásdlií'* – beauty and balance

exists around us.

"We strive to uphold this balance and ensure that development is done with respect for the land and its people," Manson said. "Our vision is to empower the Navajo community through economic opportunities and safeguard the legacy of the land to ensure future generations continue to thrive in harmony with their heritage."

The Sept. 27 signing event and ceremonial groundbreaking was the culmination of a 12-year journey to this point that entailed navigating the Navajo Nation's cumbersome bureaucracy that tends to discourage more visionaries than encourages them, he said.

That's when he and his partner, attorney Chris Deschene, who was also raised in LeChee, began knocking on tribal doors, he said.

"We had an idea, and we were trying to meet with a couple people," Manson said. "They told me, 'Hey, Otis, you're a long way from where you can



Chris Deschene is a 1993 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a U.S. Marine Corps veteran. He earned his law degree and master's in engineering from Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law and Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering.

begin.' They gave us the packet and it was so overwhelming I knew I had to get outside counsel."

Navajo Nation approvals for the proposed project never started or stalled, causing the partners delays and lost opportunities to raise capital, and the chance to be first to develop the location, he said.

"There were a lot of times I had to be in Window Rock and just sit there," Manson said. "When Nygren came to office, I was going to sit in his office as long as possible to say, 'I have this plan. I want to go forward. I'm going to wait until somebody helps me.'"

His optimism, or stubbornness, worked.

"With this administration, we have accomplished about 92-to-94% to get to where we need to be," Manson said. "With previous administrations, we got to the chapter resolution and that's about it. Most of it has been done under Nygren's administration."

Deschene said he and Manson knew the business concept and the potential for success was too good to quit.

"There were times this project was long gone, and each time we came back to it," he said. "We had to revive it. We began the process in January when the new administration took office."

President Nygren said the Horseshoe Bend project reflects how sustainable economic development, small business empowerment and the preservation of the Navajo Nation's cultural heritage occurs.

"This is what needs to happen," he said. "This is how we hold on to our culture, our language. We're not just some third world country. We want to be able to lift ourselves up and do it ourselves, and that's what you guys have done, you and your whole development team."

He said he hopes other young Navajos look at this project as a model to follow.



Horseshoe Bend Holdings, LLC, founder and CEO Otis Manson and his father Tom Manson, center, welcome President Nygren to their family's land for the groundbreaking of the Horseshoe Bend Resort.

"For those who have similar dreams as Otis, please go for it," the President said. "Reach out to our divisions and initiate those conversations. Anything is possible with consistent initiative."