



Resources and Development Committee confirms Bidtah N. Becker to the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission

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PHOTO: Bidtah N. Becker was confirmed to the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission Mar. 17. (Photograph by Jason S. Ordaz, Institute of American Indian Arts, 2021)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Speaker Seth Damon’s (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Łichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) appointment of Bidtah N. Becker to the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission (NNWRC) was approved by the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) of the Navajo Nation Council during its Mar. 17 regular meeting. Becker will now serve as the commissioner representing the Fort Defiance Agency following RDC’s unanimous confirmation.

With over 19 years of experience in developing water infrastructure, Becker will continue to advance the water rights interests of the Navajo Nation as a commissioner. Becker’s extensive professional experience includes service as the former executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources (DNR), attorney for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice (DOJ) and more.

“I am beyond honored with the appointment and I am ready to roll up my sleeves to work with the Commission, the Resources and Development Committee, the Chapters of the Fort Defiance

Agency and the entire Navajo Nation,” said Becker. “I will always put the People first, especially now that Covid-19 has shown us drinking water is a human right that Navajo people are entitled to.”

Becker is now one of five appointed commissioners on the NNWRC, as established by Resolution No. CAP-39-02 and amended by Resolution No. GSCAP-07-04.

Legislation No. 0033-21, sponsored by Speaker Damon and cosponsored by Council Delegate Wilson Stewart, Jr. (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill), confirmed Becker following a process that began last year with the public advertisement for the vacant NNWRC position by the Office of the Speaker.

Following the application period, Bidtah’s selection was issued Feb. 18. Speaker Damon praised Becker’s skill and experience in the area of Navajo policy and resource management during the selection process.

Stewart also shared his confidence in Becker and indicated she will be the first commissioner for the Fort Defiance Agency in recent years.

RDC member Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock) said: “Thank you for stepping up on this important role. We all know water is life and water is essential to our way of life and I encourage you to keep our people first.”

Becker indicated she has worked actively with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) to maintain the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project, an experience she looks forward to utilizing in serving the Fort Defiance Agency and the Navajo Nation.

As the representative for Navajo communities situated directly along the Little Colorado River, Council Delegate Thomas Walker, Jr., (Cameron, Coalmine, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi Tó’ii) pointed to the work of local groups that are successful in promoting self-reliance in their communities. Walker praised the recent work of Tolani Lake Enterprise (TLE) that demonstrates the initiative local community members are taking up to develop their water resources.

Walker acknowledged the overall challenge of water rights work and expressed his confidence in Becker’s knowledge and skill in the field.

In response, Becker praised the example of TLE and acknowledged the committee’s focus on the Navajo Nation’s water rights interests in Arizona and their desire to serve those communities.

Under Navajo Nation law, the committee has final authority for all appointments to the commission. The NNWRC is comprised of two appointments for the Eastern and Fort Defiance Agencies made by the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council, two appointments for the Shiprock and Chinle Agencies made by the Navajo Nation President, and one appointment for the Western Agency made by the Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation.

More information about the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission may be found on the commission’s website at <https://www.nnwrc.navajo-nsn.gov/>.

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