



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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\$4 Million allocated for Navajo livestock owners for hay, grain, and feed assistance during pandemic

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PHOTO: Resources and Development Committee members Mark Freeland, Wilson C. Stuart, Jr., Herman M. Daniels, Rickie Nez, and Kee Allen Begay, Jr. tours drought stricken areas impacting Navajo ranchers.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) of the 24th Navajo Nation Council directed the Division of Community Development (DCD), Division of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to begin distributing assistance from the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund Plan. Legislation RDCMA-07-21 was passed to ensure all Navajo livestock owners receive support to purchase hay, grain, and feed during the pandemic.

“This funding must get to chapters quickly. We need to help our families prepare for the cold months ahead,” said Delegate Wilson C. Stewart, Jr. (Fort Defiance, Crystal, Red Lake, Sawmill) “The RDC passed this legislation six months ago. Our ranchers and livestock owners are frustrated and have been waiting for this emergency assistance from their Council Delegates.”

The legislation provides all chapters with \$4 million dollars. The DCD will provide administrative oversight and will coordinate with the DA and the Office of the Controller (OOC) to ensure the chapter purchases are within the allowable expenditures. The DCD has a spreadsheet of resolutions submitted by chapters with community requests for assistance. Weekly calls with the DNR, grazing officials and land board members are planned.

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Working with other divisions and programs has been a challenge for the DCD to execute funding allocations to chapters because of distribution planning. Last week, Community Development Division Director, Dr. Pearl Yellowman, provided a report stating that some chapters may not have the proper resources to deliver and transport hay, grain, and feed to livestock owners.

“A community plan needs to be in place to assist with deliveries and the transportation of the grain and hay. We will work with the Navajo Agriculture Products Industry to meet the needs of our ranchers,” said Chairman Daniel E. Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor). “We should be working directly with our enterprises that were established to provide for the Navajo people.”

The chapter distribution is based on a 50/50 formula and livestock owners must be a registered member of their chapter in order to apply for assistance.

“Our grazing officials are having issues on the ground level,” said Department of Agriculture Director Leo Watchman. “They are asking if it is supposed to only be given to grazing permit holders or we implement a tally count for all those participating.”

Division of Natural Resources Division Director, Dr. Rudy Shebala, spoke in support of the current legislation regardless of livestock owners holding grazing permits. DNR will submit a distribution guideline and eligibility criteria to DCD to begin implementation of this project utilizing the RDP process.

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