



## The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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November 19, 2008

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Red Mesa Chapter inching closer to LGA certification, receives TCDC and Navajo Council support

*Red Mesa Chapter celebrates, thanks Navajo Nation Council members and chapter officials*

**RED MESA, Ariz.** — The Red Mesa Chapter celebrated their achievement for being another chapter inching closer to being certified under the Navajo Nation Local Governance Act of 1998 by the Transportation and Community Development Committee of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council.

The law recognizes governance at the local level and requires that if chapters want to administer their land, a Community-Based Land Use Plan must be developed and implemented and updated every five years. The plan must also be based on results of a community assessment.

Chapter officials and the community presented the plan to the committee on Oct. 31, where the Transportation and Community Development Committee (TCDC) unanimously voted to grant the chapter certification of its Community-based Land Use Plan under the Local Governance Act.

Now, the Chapter must adopt and operate under a Five Management System and the Office of the Auditor General has to review their system before recommending full certification by the TCDC of whether to certify their system or not.

In response to the approval of the land use plan, Russell Gould, president of Red Mesa Chapter said, "We're here to improve the community. Our land, nihi keyah, it is so sacred to us — we're attached to it."

The Red Mesa Chapter planning area is located in the southeastern corner of Utah and northeastern corner of Arizona. The chapter was once part of the Teec Nos Pos Chapter, formally Sweetwater Chapter, before long distances and treacherous roads led the Red Mesa community to request to become a separate chapter. Red Mesa became the first Utah community chapter certified by the Navajo Tribal Council and today is one of seven Utah Navajo chapters.

Upon separating from Sweetwater, Red Mesa joined the Mexican Water Chapter under the leadership of Councilman Little Pouch. When oil was discovered in the area in the early 1940s, revenue was generated and the community decided to get its own chapter certification.

The Red Mesa Chapter was certified in 1965 by the Navajo Tribal Council and the newly elected leaders began conducting meetings. It was their first discussion to begin building their own chapter.

The history of the community was a major part of the presentation and led to discussion of the community's vision for its future generations. The plan included goals and objectives for business and economic development, public safety, education, utilities, communications, housing, grazing, land preservation and restoration, recreation, and about transportation and water rights. Statistical data and graphs were provided to support the plan.



Red Mesa Chapter received their LGA certification Oct. 31, 2008 at Red Mesa Chapter in Red Mesa, Ariz. Pictured are Council Delegates Kenneth Maryboy and Davis Filfred with Red Mesa Chapter officials. (Photo by Natasha Johnson)

Gould said the land use plan was also designed to preserve vegetation for sheep, horses, donkeys and cows, which still play a vital role in the lives of many traditional Navajo families in the area.

"The residents are instilled with a deep respect and pride for the land," said Council Delegate Kenneth Maryboy (Mexican Water/Aneth/Red Mesa). "That respect is well reflected in the plan and can be seen by the huge turnout we have today."

The Red Mesa Chapter was filled with community members who sat in on the presentation. Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water/Aneth/Red Mesa) said the community was heavily involved in creating the land use plan.

"There were a lot of people involved," Filfred said. "We received a lot of input from the community and we provided technical assistance from several entities to make this a strong plan."

A number of people were recognized for their contributions to creating this plan, they included Chapter President Russell Gould; Vice-President Victor Dee; Secretary/Treasurer Luci Begay; Grazing Officer Charley Lee Begay; Minnie John, community services coordinator; Council Delegates Kenneth Maryboy and Davis Filfred; former Council Delegate Mark Maryboy; Land Commissioners Kenneth Joe, Lloyd Toney, Marilyn Holly, Tully Lameman; and former Community Land Use Planning Committee members Edward Tapaha, Stanley Sam, Martha Long and Johnny Stash.

Before certifying the chapter's plan, the TCDC provided recommendations for the community's land use plan, like expanding more on the water rights and addressing burial sight issues. The recommendations were well-received by the community.

After the plan was officially passed by the committee, Kenneth Maryboy stood up and led the community in a standing ovation and applause. A celebratory traditional Navajo meal was provided to those in attendance following the certification.

"Red Mesa Chapter presented a sound and effective community land use plan and I congratulate them on achieving this status," Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan said upon hearing about the achievements of Red Mesa Chapter. "With their vision and a solid plan to support it, I am looking forward to the changes the community is going to make. I commend their leaders for getting their constituents heavily involved in the planning process."

"This is a very historic day for the Red Mesa community and Red Mesa Chapter," said Gould. "As a community, we can pursue our own destiny."

With the certification, the chapter can now administer their land pursuant to the LGA and consistent with all other Navajo laws. The certification will allow the chapter to improve community decision making and, under the law, the chapter now has the authority "to review all matters affecting the community and make appropriate recommendations to the Navajo Nation, county and state governmental agencies."



Council Delegate Kenneth Maryboy congratulating Red Mesa Chapter for their LGA certification Oct. 31, 2008 in Red Mesa, Ariz. (Photo by Natasha Johnson)

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