



# 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Officials provide update on water contamination in San Juan County**



**PHOTO:** Speaker LoRenzo Bates addresses the public and New Mexico State Environment Department Secretary Ryan Flynn, State Engineer Tom Blaine, as well as San Juan County, City of Farmington, and City of Aztec representatives at a public meeting held at the Farmington Civic Center on August 8, 2015.

**FARMINGTON, N.M.** – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) on Saturday, attended a public meeting at the Farmington Civic Center in which New Mexico State Environment Department Secretary Ryan Flynn, State Engineer Tom Blaine, as well as San Juan County, City of Farmington, and City of Aztec representatives provided updates regarding the ongoing contamination of the Animas River in Colorado and the San Juan River in New Mexico.

A summary of updates provided at the meeting are listed below:

- San Juan County has been monitoring discharge of contaminants. Discharge is currently on the west side of Farmington
- The plume of contaminated water is approximately 80-miles long

- Bureau of Reclamation has released more water from behind the dam to try to dissolve or dissipate contaminants; release of water has been increased from 650 cubic feet per second to 1300 cubic feet per second
- San Juan County and New Mexico Environment Dept. are continuing to provide information to all agencies
- The Environmental Protection Agency is collecting samples from sites in Aztec and Farmington. They do not have results on testing available; it will take more time to assess what is in water and level of contaminants
- EPA has not provided information or results of initial testing to San Juan County or to the State of New Mexico
- State of New Mexico is working with San Juan County to monitor and conduct their own testing
- People that are on municipal or domestic systems have been told that the drinking water is safe for use. Navajo Nation communities along San Juan River receive water from the City of Farmington municipal system. The municipal system has a 90 day supply of water
- There are concerns about agricultural impact, which is use for livestock and farming
- People are advised to keep away from the river water and keep all livestock away from water
- The contaminants are expected to reach Lake Powell by Wednesday
- The long term effects are unknown at this time

On Friday, Speaker Bates also released a statement in which he noted that officials with Navajo Agricultural Products Industry have assured Navajo Nation officials that the contamination will not adversely impact the enterprise's water supply or products because it diverts water directly out of Navajo Reservoir which does not receive any water from the Animas River.

In a press release dated Aug. 8, 2015, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority officials state that there is no threat to the drinking water from the spill, which includes the NTUA water system in the northern New Mexico portion of the Navajo Nation.

NTUA Deputy General Manager Rex Kontz, said that the NTUA water system from Farmington to the community of Beclabito is not impacted.

Additionally, as a precautionary measure NTUA has shut down a water treatment facility in Mexican Hat that provides service to the community of Halchita in Utah and two water wells in Montezuma Creek. NTUA is providing water to the communities from alternative sources.

Speaker Bates continues to urge the public to keep their livestock away from the San Juan River and to refrain from any contact with the water until testing and evaluations are complete.

The Navajo Nation Council is scheduled to receive an update from emergency management officials on Monday beginning at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber in Window Rock. The meeting is open to the public. The Office of the Speaker is working with the Office of Broadcast Services to live-stream the meeting.

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