



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Naabik'iyáti' Committee unanimously supports the completion of Navajo Indian Irrigation Project for Navajo Agricultural Products Industry

LEUPP, Ariz. – The Naabik'iyáti' Committee last Thursday, unanimously approved Legislation No. 0382-15, supporting the efforts of Navajo Agricultural Products Industry to obtain funding from the federal government for the completion of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project – located south of Farmington, N.M. on the Navajo Nation.

NAPI is a Navajo Nation owned enterprise that farms agricultural products, which was created through a 1962 Congressional bill, P.L. 87-483, that obligated the federal government to provide funding for the planning, designing, and construction of 110,630 acres of irrigable land to develop commercial farming.

The NIIP resources resulted from an exchange of 110,000 acre-feet of water from the San Juan basin for the Chama Diversion Project, which was completed in 1976 to benefit of non-Navajos while the NIIP project remains incomplete to this day.

In November, Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, and acting CEO of Navajo Agricultural Products Industry Lionel Haskie, met with the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Mike Black, to advocate for the completion of the NIIP.

“This resolution solidifies the position of the Navajo Nation and the resolution will be forwarded to federal officials to convey the need to complete this important project,” said Speaker Bates.

Since the creation of NAPI, annual funding for NIIP construction has declined from \$25 million, to \$12.5 million, to a current low of \$3.3 million. To date, NIIP construction remains only 75-percent complete and estimates show that it will cost over \$700 million to complete the project, which includes Blocks 9, 10, and 11 – each consisting of 10,000 acres of land.

The completion of Block 9 consists of three phases. Phase I is complete however, according to Haskie, to complete construction of Block 9 NIIP and farm development it will cost an estimated appraisal value of \$104 million today.

Officials also emphasize that the Navajo Nation continues to lose out of potential revenues due to the lack of expansion and farming on an annual basis. In addition, water that is designated for use by the NIIP for farming at the NAPI location continues to flow downstream year after year due to the lack of funding from the federal government.

Navajo officials also told officials with the U.S. Department of the Interior that the lack of funding creates uncertainty over future planning and investing for NAPI.

The entities are scheduled to meet in January to further discuss funding and the reformation of a NIIP technical working group, which was previously established decades ago but no longer exists under the current administration.

The Naabik'iyáti' Committee voted 15-0 in support of Legislation No. 0382-15, sponsored by Speaker Bates. The Naabik'iyáti' Committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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