



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee receives report on feral horse roundup

WINDOW ROCK – Last Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture regarding the feral horse roundup program that was implemented in 2013, as well as a financial update for the initiative.

NNDOA director Leo Watchman said the Navajo Nation Council appropriated \$3.1 million in Fiscal Year 2013, to be used by the NNDOA and Navajo Nation Department of Resource Enforcement to conduct feral horse roundups and to devise solutions to grazing and livestock management issues.

“It is estimated that there are 70,000 to 80,000 feral horses throughout the Navajo Nation,” said Watchman. “The majority of the feral horses do not have brands, and those that do, have been orphaned by their owners.”

Watchman said that the increase of hay sale prices ranging from \$16 to \$20 per bale, may have led livestock owners to let their horses graze in the open range, contributing to decreases of forage and water resources on the land.

According to the report, the NNDOA had a carryover of approximately \$539,000 from the original appropriated amount, and funded various things such as labor, travel, a Navajo Horse Summit, equipment, transportation purchases, and operating supplies.

Watchman added that although many chapters passed resolutions indicating a need for the roundups, several resolutions were later rescinded because community members became discontent with the practice, regardless of the community education efforts on the roundups.

BFC member Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock), said in addition to the horse trainings and roundups, the Navajo public should be further educated on how overgrazing is affecting the land and how to better manage their livestock.

“I am in full support of developing your program Mr. Watchman, from a financial standpoint. You can tell a lot about a society by the way they treat their animals, and not taking care of our horses is a poor reflection of our Nation,” said Delegate Chee. “We have failed our horses and we cannot neglect them any longer.”

Delegate Chee recommended that the program receive continued support and funding until the feral horse problem has been fully addressed, and to further educate Navajo communities of their responsibility as livestock owners.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) requested a report regarding the sale prices and profit of feral horses that have been sold to third-parties, and how the profits have or will be utilized.

In response, Watchman said the responsibility of the horse sales and profits belonged to Resource Enforcement, adding that he would collaborate with their office to provide a more thorough report to the BFC at a later date.

BFC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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