



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Navajo Indian Irrigation Project Negotiation Subcommittee encourages NAPI to offer farming opportunities to Navajo communities**

**FARMINGTON, N.M.** – During a meeting held on Friday, the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project Negotiation Subcommittee received reports from Navajo Agricultural Products Industry management, Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Region Office, and the Navajo Nation Land Department regarding updates on federal funding, land statuses, and NIIP priorities.

The Navajo Nation Council's Naabik'íyáti' Committee created the subcommittee in April 2017, for the purpose of negotiating an MOA with the federal government regarding the funding and completion of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, to advocate for Operations and Maintenance funding, and other available funds. The members include Council Delegates Steven Begay, Benjamin L. Bennett, Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Leonard Tsosie, and Speaker LoRenzo Bates.

Public Law 87-483 which was passed by congress in 1962, established the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project for the purpose of furnishing irrigation water to approximately 110,630 acres of farmland on the Navajo Nation. NAPI, under a contract with the BIA, performs operations and maintenance, on-farm development, and agricultural testing research laboratory.

During the discussion, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) recommended that NAPI include partnerships with the 110 Navajo chapters as part of their priorities for farming and agricultural projects and opportunities.

“Navajo communities and families have been farming way before NIIP's and NAPI's establishment, however, they need help with resources to restore their farms and water irrigations. NAPI has the resources and expertise to assist the communities. The farming opportunities would also help families and communities come back together,” said Delegate Tsosie.

According to NAPI delegated CEO Lionel Haskie, NAPI has been working closely with several communities on initiatives such as the Many farms irrigation project, Crystal irrigation project, Upper Fruitland drainage project, Tsaille/Wheatfields soil testing project, Leupp irrigation project, Tohatchi irrigation system for green house project, and others. NAPI plans to create more partnerships with communities in the near future, added Haskie.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) recommended that NAPI also extend services and opportunities to local farm boards and grazing committees.

“The community pilot projects opened the doors for NAPI to extend their services to all areas of the Nation. NAPI needs to continue to provide recommendations to communities who intend to revitalize their farming areas and to make necessary agreements with the BIA to make begin their projects,” said Delegate Begay.

The subcommittee and NAPI management are scheduled to present to the congressional members on March 9, regarding NIIP priorities.

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