



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee supports fund management plan for Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

WINDOW ROCK – The Budget and Finance Committee approved Legislation No. 0267-18 on Wednesday, adopting a fund management plan for the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund as mandated by the Síhasin Fund Pasture Range and Forage Expenditure Plan enacted through Council Resolution No. CMY-54-18.

In Nov. 2016, the Navajo Nation Council passed Resolution No. CO-57-16 adopting the Síhasin Fund Pasture Range and Forage Expenditure Plan, which reserved nearly \$20 million from the Síhasin Fund to guarantee insurance premiums necessary for the Nation’s participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Pasture, Rangeland, Forage Insurance Program for 2017 and 2018.

In May, Council approved Resolution No. CMY-54-18 to extend the Navajo Nation’s participation in the program for an additional five years through the end of the 2023 crop year. The Nation’s investment insures the Navajo Nation during periods of time that the Navajo Nation receives little to no rainfall resulting in drought conditions that impact agriculture, livestock, and rangeland.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T’iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland), who sponsored the legislation, said the purpose of the fund management plan is to allow the net proceeds, or indemnity payments to the Nation, to fund agricultural infrastructure projects after certain conditions are met, and would primarily be utilized for drought-related impacts to farms and ranches.

“The Navajo Nation Council had the foresight to consider projected drought conditions on Navajo land and the adverse impacts it could have for Navajo farming and ranching operations. The insurance coverage that resulted in payments to the Nation will now be used as a safety net to provide assistance to our farmers and ranchers,” said Speaker Bates.

He added that the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources and its Department of Agriculture would have the authority and responsibility to manage and administer the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund and implement the agricultural infrastructure projects pursuant to the fund management plan.

Potential projects include range, grazing and livestock; tribal ranches infrastructure; farming and irrigation; agricultural water development; dams, reservoirs and catchments; watershed planning for agriculture; agricultural complexes; drought contingency plan; area wide fencing; brand office and Navajo Partitioned Lands and the Former Bennett Freeze Area projects, including administration costs.

So far in 2018, the Navajo Nation continues to receive little snow and rainfall, and officials informed the Navajo Nation that they anticipate another large return at the end of the 2018 crop year, added Speaker Bates.

The fund management plan for the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund states that recipients of the funding shall account for all money spent and provide updates on the progress of their projects, and would also be required to include quarterly reports on the accounting for the expenditure of the funds and conduct annual audits of the allocated funding for all agricultural projects. The reports are to be provided to the BFC, Resources and Development Committee, and the Navajo Nation Council.

BFC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0267-18 with one directive, which stipulates that amendments to the fund management plan would need to be considered by the Budget and Finance Committee.

Additionally, the Resources and Development Committee considered the bill on the same day and voted 3-0 to approve the legislation.

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