



Navajo Nation Council Resolution CJY-67-20 coronavirus water projects expenditures signed into law for \$130,005,095

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Included in Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CJY-67-20, more than \$130 million was signed into law for water projects across the Navajo Nation in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Sunday. CJY-67-20 was approved unanimously by the 24th Navajo Nation Council on Jul. 31 for a total of more than \$650 million in immediate pandemic response expenditures for the Navajo Nation.

“These water projects represent some of the most immediate and most dire needs of the Navajo people,” said 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (Baahaali, Chilchiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). “We thank the many dedicated Navajo Nation employees, enterprise partners, federal agency technical staff, local leaders, chapter governments and others for helping the 24th Navajo Nation Council assemble this important water projects package. This collaborative effort with Executive Branch staff will benefit the health and wellbeing of our Navajo People greatly.”

The Navajo Nation CARES Fund water projects expenditure plan immediately provides \$130,005,095 to the Navajo Department of Water Resources to administer for water projects on the Navajo Nation. These water projects include waterline and cistern projects, water hauling, windmill repairs, water well infrastructure, and earthen dam-irrigation project rehabilitation and more.

“We know that the need for a massive investment in water infrastructure on the Navajo Nation is required,” said Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley Tse’alnaozt’i’i, Sheepsprings, Beclabito, Gadiiahi/To’Koi). “We thank President Nez for recognizing that the need is beyond our ability to fund entirely on our own and for signing into law Council’s immediate allocation to water projects. It is now the responsibility of Council, through its legislative oversight, to ensure that these funds move quickly to the projects and communities that will have the most immediate outcomes in preventing the spread of the coronavirus and its impacts.”

The Navajo Nation Council found that the expenditures are necessary to provide the Navajo people with access to potable water necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. The water projects will also help the Navajo people comply with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.

Additionally, the Navajo Nation Council acknowledged the importance of providing for emergency livestock and agricultural water resources for Navajo communities during the pandemic. The pandemic exacerbated long-standing water access disparities brought on by a prolonged period of droughts in the southwest United States.

“Each of these projects bring water closer to Navajo homes,” said Council Delegate Paul Begay (Coppermine, K’aibii’to, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake, Bodaway/Gap). “Water is all around us, but it requires a lot of manpower and resources to get to. The Navajo Nation Council has worked together with the Executive Branch and our partners to put forward this water projects package, and I am pleased to see that it has been signed into law.”

The water projects expenditure plan is funded by the Navajo Nation CARES Fund, which was established through Resolution No. CMY-44-20. The fund is comprised of all federal funds received by the Navajo Nation from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

The Navajo Nation Council began holding work sessions with the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), Navajo Area Indian Health Service, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture and other technical advisors on May 22 to discuss water needs.

At that point, the group presented a need of more than \$700 million to provide running water for every Navajo resident on the Navajo Nation.

Throughout successive work sessions and revisions, an amount of \$130 million in water projects was identified for immediate expenditures before the Dec. 30 federal deadline for spending CARES Act money.

“Water access gives the Navajo People a better chance in the fight against the coronavirus,” said Council Delegate Daniel E. Tso (Littlewater, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake, Baca/Brewitt, Casamero Lake, Ojo Encino, Counselor). “These water projects focus on increasing the number of Navajo homes that will benefit directly, in terms of their health and hygiene, to an important resource that is taken for granted in nearly every other area of the country. We thank each of our partners for working together on this, and ensuring we have a good representation of each agency of the Navajo Nation.”

The water projects expenditure plan includes:

- \$87,485,860 for the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources for bathroom additions to Navajo homes, cistern and waterline projects, support to water haulers, regional and local water projects and connections, NTUA loan to grant conversions, and more;
- \$18,635,000 for the NTUA projects that include \$16,015,000 for general water projects and \$2,620,000 for wastewater projects;
- \$937,712 for the Whitehorse Lake–Sand Springs Water Supply Pipeline;
- \$20,946,523 for 150 NTUA cistern systems at \$46,823.36 each, 150 plumbing systems at \$25,000 each, 150 septic tank systems with a drainfield solar component to mitigate system failure at \$25,000 each, 150 3000w pump and refrigeration units at \$30,000 each and \$1,923,009.00 cistern contingency for the remainder of the 2020 year; and
- \$2 million for the To’hajiilee-Albuquerque Water Supply Line.

“For the community of To’hajiilee, water supplies are running low and soon, the community wells will become inoperable,” said Council Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, To’hajiilee). “This coronavirus pandemic is putting a strain on an already limited system, so this funding is an important part of ensuring chapter members have clean running water.”

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez returned Resolution No. CJY-67-20 with partial line-item vetoes on the tenth day of the 10-day presidential action period following certification by the Speaker of the Navajo Nation. In total \$475,666,192 was approved and signed into law through CJY-67-20. The resolution is publicly accessible on the Navajo Nation Council’s legislative tracking system, Diné Bibeeshaz’áanii Binaaltsoos (DiBB): <http://dibb.nnols.org>.

“Thank you to the 24th Navajo Nation Council for moving the legislation through the process with all the hard work put in by Delegates and Legislative Staff,” said President Nez in a letter to Speaker Damon.

Executive Branch programs will now be responsible for administering Navajo Nation CARES Funded projects for both Navajo Nation departments and for projects involving non-governmental organizations.

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MEDIA CONTACTS: communications@navajo-nsn.gov (928) 287-2085
Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director
Timothy Benally, Public Information Officer
Isabella S. Robbins, Staff Writer