



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee approves the Navajo Nation's first large scale sand and gravel lease

TSE BONITO, N.M. – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0101-18, approving a sand and gravel lease for the Navajo Nation Division of Transportation to operate and maintain a sand and gravel pit within the community of Greasewood Springs, located approximately 55-miles north of Holbrook, Ariz. The sand and gravel pit would occupy 50 acres of land and an access road to provide gravel for maintaining and improving road infrastructure on the Navajo Nation.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat), who sponsored the legislation, stated that the project will be the first large scale sand and gravel pit on the Navajo Nation and it would provide many opportunities for road improvements and maintenance throughout the Nation.

“This project has been one of the top priorities for the committee. The accomplishment of the committee’s priority marks a special time in history. Currently, the Navajo Nation imports a majority of its sand and gravel, which costs the Nation millions every year. This sand and gravel pit would produce 60,000 to 200,000 tons of materials every year and improve approximately 57-miles of roads a year throughout the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Shepherd.

Delegate Shepherd added that sand and gravel pits also provide opportunities for bonds, royalties, and jobs for the Navajo Nation.

According to Navajo Nation Division of Transportation division director Garrett Silversmith, the lease would be valid for a period of five years. There is nearly 9,000-miles of dirt roads and 7,500-miles of paved roads within the Navajo Nation and the sand and gravel pit would provide opportunities of road improvements throughout the Nation, added Silversmith.

During the discussion, Council Delegate Lee Jack, Sr. (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone), who represents the community of Greasewood Springs, highlighted that the Greasewood Springs Chapter has worked diligently and collaboratively with NDOT, RDC, and the Office of the President and Vice President to make the project a reality.

“The process to bring this opportunity to the community was not easy, however, everyone worked together to make it possible. I also express my appreciation to the grazing permittees who gave consent for the sand and gravel pit acres,” said Delegate Jack.

Delegate Shepherd also extended his appreciation to the families of Minnie Spencer, Alice Spencer, and Jeannie S. Gishey, who granted consent for NDOT to use portions of their grazing land areas for the sand and gravel pit and access road.

In support of the legislation, RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), stated that the large scale sand and gravel pit would also promote future developments of other large scale gravel pits throughout the Nation.

“There are many small scale sand and gravel pits throughout the Nation, however, it is time for the Nation to begin developing large sand and gravel industries. Using our own natural resources would also allow us to keep Navajo monies within the Nation instead of spending millions for imported sand and gravel,” said Delegate Filfred.

During the discussion, Vice President Jonathan Nez also commended Greasewood Springs Chapter, NDOT, Bureau of Indian Affairs, OPVP staff, and RDC for working together to establish the sand and gravel pit.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0101-18 with a 3-1 vote and serves as the final authority for the bill. The approved lease will be forwarded to the BIA for review.

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