



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee receives report from the Navajo Partition Lands grazing officials

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee received a report from the Navajo Partition Lands Grazing Official Committee chair Leslie Williams, Navajo Department of Agriculture director Leo Watchman, and Bureau of Indian Affairs regional director Sharon Pinto. The report focused on the reissuance of grazing permits on the Navajo Partitioned Lands, recent initiatives by the NPL grazing officials, and a request for additional funding for the NPL Grazing Official Committee.

The NPL Grazing Official Committee consists of 14 grazing officials, who represent the 14 chapters that are affected by the NPL, to manage and enforce matters related to rangeland, livestock, and to educate potential permittees on cancelled grazing permits within the NPL area.

In 1940, administrative control of livestock grazing within the NPL began with the issuance of the first formal grazing permits in the federal 1882 Executive Order Reservation. Pursuant to 25 C.F.R 71 and 72, grazing permits were cancelled by court order in Oct. 1972, and were never reissued.

The Navajo-Hopi Settlement Act required the development of new grazing regulations for the NPL, therefore, new federal regulations were published in Oct. 2005 in 25 C.F.R 161 Section 161.400, which allowed the Nation to establish eligibility requirements for grazing allocations and grant permits, according to the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture.

In support of the reissuance of grazing permits on the NPL, Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) urged his committee members to support the NPL Grazing Official Committee with a supportive letter to begin the process of reissuing the grazing permits.

“The NPL grazing committee requests the committee’s support. A letter needs to be addressed to the BIA to request the cancelled grazing permit listing and to accept the BIA’s NPL carrying capacity and stocking rate recommendation so we can begin the process of reissuance,” said Delegate Filfred.

According to a memo dated Feb. 3, 2017 from the BIA regional director, Pinto recommended an equal distribution of a 10 sheep-units yearlong stocking rate and carrying capacity for all permits issued on NPL precinct one, two, and three to begin permit issuance.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) stated that the 10 sheep-units yearlong is very low, but with proper investments from the Nation and the BIA, the range forage conditions and the sheep-units yearlong could increase and improve in the future.

“The committee needs to support the recommendation from the BIA regarding the sheep units, because we need to give that livelihood back to the permittees. They waited long enough and the Nation needs to work together to begin the process of issuing the cancelled grazing permits,” said Delegate Phelps.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) emphasized that the committee will continue to support the initiatives of the NPL Grazing Official Committee.

“Reissuing the permits is a long process and the committee will continue to work and address the mess the federal government put us in. The process increases the work load for the agriculture department and grazing officials, therefore, the BIA needs to make a monetary investment to complete the work,” said Delegate Shepherd.

The Resources and Development Committee accepted the report with a vote of 4-0 with one directive.

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