



Navajo Nation's Colorado Ranches Submit Budget Proposal Requests to Budget & Finance and Resources & Development Committees

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PHOTO: Budget & Finance and Resources & Development Committee members of the Navajo Nation Council receive budget proposal requests June 18, 2021 at Wolf Springs Ranch, Colo.

WOLF SPRINGS RANCH, Colo. — Last week, the Budget & Finance (BFC) and Resource & Development (RDC) Committees of the 24th Navajo Nation Council held a two-day joint work session to receive Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife's (NNDFW) \$1.7 million budget proposal request to cover operations at the Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranch in Colorado.

"We should not only take care of the ranches but advance its ranch operations to expand the possibilities for economic development," said Jimmy Yellowhair (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Piñon, Whippoorwill). "We need to plan for the development and processes of timeline and how to reach those milestones."

The Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranch are currently established as Navajo Nation Enterprises under the Division of Natural Resources (DNR). Both are located approximately 60 miles west of Pueblo, CO and have a combined 28,855 acres.

Samuel Diswood, Wildlife Manager of NNDFW and General Manager for Wolf Springs Ranch and Boyer Ranch, alongside Gloria Tom, NNDFW Director, provided a report in July 2016 outlining the purchase history of both ranches and the 2018 Fund Management Plan.

Diswood reported both ranches generated \$862,874.13 in revenue for 2019 and \$751,402.50 in 2020. Although the 2021 revenue is projected to be \$723,793.39, he indicated it may not be enough to address the additional costs caused by the ongoing drought conditions and COVID-19.

“With no production of hay within the last year, along with crop and forage shortages, most of the budget went into purchasing forage and hay for the livestock and bison. This in turn short ranged the cost for equipment,” added Diswood. “Drought, water shortages, lack of rainfall and impacts of COVID-19 led to low market costs -- resulting in anything that would have went to market, such as processing the animals, was at least a year behind due to the pandemic.”

NNDFW staff reported they are working on a drought management plan with the ranch programs from the State of Colorado to assist in forage and livestock feed for the lost revenue and for future drought conditions that might affect the ranches’ operation.

NNDFW are also currently working with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to research efficient needs for forage recovery and land under the Cover Crop Program (CCP). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) also provided some assistance for electronic ID program from both bison and cattle to help with sales and revenue.

Dr. Rudy R. Shebala, DNR Executive Director stated his support for the requested \$1.7 million through legislation for the ranches. Shebala stated the request was also included in this year’s comprehensive budget and within the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

“This legislation request is out of emergency for the Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranch Enterprise expenses, which include but are not limited to heavy equipment and equipment that came with the ranch are at least over 20 years old and tractors that need new transmission and engine repairs,” added Shebala.

Before accepting the report, Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint) included a directive to DNR to make the proposed emergency budget a priority and to request an updated report within 15 days regarding the status of the legislation progress to the BFC and RDC.

“You really have to be here at Wolf Springs Ranch to appreciate all of what it has to offer,” said BFC Chairman Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee). “You really don’t get an idea until you see it for yourself, the magnificence of the pristineness and heritage it brings to our people.”

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