



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo leaders welcome Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner to the Navajo Nation



PHOTO: Speaker Crystalyne Curley speaks with BOR Commissioner Maria Camille Calimlim Touton at a windmill site located south of Leupp, Ariz. on July 19, 2024.

LEUPP, Ariz. — 25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley along with Resources and Development Committee (RDC) Chair Brenda Jesus and Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson welcomed U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Commissioner Maria Camille Calimlim Touton and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Gary Gold to the Navajo Nation on Friday, to visit several rural communities to provide greater insight into the water accessibility challenges that many Navajo families face and to see the progress of water infrastructure development.

In her capacity overseeing the Bureau of Reclamation, Commissioner Touton helps manage the federal government's investments in drought and water resiliency, including funding for water efficiency and recycling programs, rural water projects, WaterSMART grants, and dam safety to ensure that irrigators, tribes, and adjoining communities receive adequate assistance and support.

Speaker Curley, Attorney General Ethel Branch, Water Rights Commission Chair Joelynn Ashley, and technical experts visited the home of a Navajo elder, in Canyon Diablo located south of

Leupp, Ariz., whose family relies on hauling water from a nearby windmill for her domestic and livestock needs. Commissioner Touton joined the family for a water hauling trip that led them through miles of rough dirt roads.

“The daily challenges are real for many Navajo people when it comes to hauling water for their homes, livestock, and basic needs but we are a resilient people. Within the past several years, the Navajo Nation Council has appropriated nearly one billion dollars for water infrastructure and development in our communities, but more is needed. With the Arizona water rights settlement that awaits congressional approval, we are hopeful that thousands more of our people will have access to clean water,” said Speaker Curley.

In May, the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement that will deliver much-needed water to Navajo homes and communities if approved by Congress. Prior to the site visits, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren also met with the Commissioner to convey his support for water development.

RDC Vice Chair Johnson, who represents the Leupp community, spoke to the Commissioner about the Nation’s investments and collaboration with federal agencies that led to the Leupp-Dilkon Pipeline that now delivers water to the Dilkon Medical Center, which opened last August to provide medical services for communities in the southwest portion of the Navajo Nation.

Speaker Curley and RDC Chair Jesus stated that the new Dilkon Medical Center demonstrates the Navajo Nation’s need for more water and how water infrastructure builds communities, creates jobs and economic opportunities, and provides critical services for many.

The 25th Navajo Nation Council extends its appreciation to Commissioner Touton and Deputy Assistant Secretary Gold for their visit to the Navajo Nation and continued support.

On July 23, President Nygren is scheduled to provide testimony before the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries in support of the Arizona water rights bill, the Rio San José and Rio Jemez Water Settlements Act of 2023, and the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project Amendments Act of 2023.

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