



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Resources and Development Committee calls for legislative action amid climate change report



Resources and Development Committee raised concerns over the water crisis and land degradation issues caused by climate change, overgrazing, and illegal dumping.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Nation Resources and Development Committee (RDC) approved a report from the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Climate Change Program, emphasizing the need for stronger inter-agency collaboration and legislative action to address critical environmental challenges.

RDC members raised concerns over the worsening water crisis and land degradation due to climate change, overgrazing, and illegal dumping. Delegate Brenda Jesus highlighted the urgency of the situation.

“We are facing severe drought conditions. Our water tables are depleting, and we didn’t get enough moisture this winter. Overgrazing by livestock, both permitted and illegally; exacerbates the problem. We need to find real solutions, not just discussions,” Jesus stated.

During the presentation, Climate Change Program lead Nekai Eversole detailed the initiative’s goals, which are primarily funded by the BAA Tribal Climate Resilience Grant (\$399,000) and the U.S. EPA’s Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. These funds support environmental technicians, community outreach, and sustainable agriculture efforts, including a planned greenhouse and demonstration farm aimed at teaching water-efficient farming and soil conservation.

“Our mission is to integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge with Western science to create a sustainable future for the Navajo Nation,” said Eversole. “We are working to implement climate adaptation strategies, land restoration, and food sovereignty programs to strengthen our communities.”

Chair Jesus emphasized the need for a coordinated enforcement approach, urging Fish and Wildlife to work closely with the Department of Agriculture and local grazing officials to hold permit holders accountable.

In response to the report, Delegate Danny Simpson pushed for immediate action beyond policy discussions.

“I don’t want to just hear another report and wait for the next committee to take it up. We need legislation, whether that means amending existing laws, creating new policies, or securing funding for enforcement,” Simpson said.

Delegates called for a multi-agency collaboration, stressing that tackling the feral horse crisis, land degradation, and pollution requires the involvement of Fish and Wildlife, Agriculture, Water Resources, and Law Enforcement.

“If each department works in isolation, nothing will change. We need a unified approach,” Simpson added.

Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson acknowledged the importance of partnerships and urged the Climate Change Program to expand collaborations with outside organizations and federal agencies.

“Climate adaptation requires a united effort. We need to strengthen our partnerships, integrate scientific research with Indigenous knowledge, and equip our communities with the tools to adapt to these environmental challenges,” said Johnson.

The Climate Change Program, initially based on the 2018 Climate Adaptation Plan, seeks to bridge traditional ecological knowledge with modern climate science to build community resilience. Key priorities include water conservation, pollution mitigation, food sovereignty, land restoration, and enforcement of grazing regulations.

To ensure tangible outcomes, the RDC has scheduled a work session on March 27-28 to refine the Climate Adaptation Plan. The Fish and Wildlife representatives will be included in the discussion along with the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other key stakeholders to develop enforceable policies and funding strategies.

“We appreciate the work that Fish and Wildlife is doing on the ground. Now, we need to turn these reports into measurable actions,” said Jesus.

The Resources and Development Committee’s approval of three in favor and none opposed, signified a commitment to advancing climate adaptation initiatives on Navajo Nation.

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