



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Resources and Development Committee advances strategic funding plan for Agriculture Infrastructure Fund projects



Resources and Development Committee deliberated a report from Agriculture Department Director Jesse Jim to assess Agriculture Infrastructure Fund projects.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Monday, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) deliberated a report from Department of Agriculture Director Jesse Jim on the Year 3 Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) project. Jim presented a comprehensive report that outlined funding priorities, departmental expenditures, and necessary legislative amendments to meet the evolving agricultural needs.

“The AIF is funded by indemnities paid to the Nation through our Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage insurance policy,” said RDC Chair Jesus. “The Committee diligently supports our ranchers and farmers strategically implementing projects that are vetted through grazing committees, land boards, and aligned with USDA guidelines.”

The Committee supported Jim’s recommendation for a revised allocation of \$5.6 million in AIF resources, which would be necessary to close out Year Three of the program and set the stage for a projected \$24.9 million in funding for Year Four.

Year Three originally faced a \$4 million deficit due to prior over-allocations and unapproved projects. However, with strategic cuts, consolidations, and a narrowing of the project scope to nine core initiatives, the funding now balances precisely at \$5.6 million.

“This adjustment zeroes us out for Year Three and puts us in a strong financial position moving forward,” said Jesse Jim. “If we remained with the previously proposed \$9.2 million in

unapproved projects, we would have been \$4 million in the red. This revised plan protects our financial integrity and honors USDA guidelines.”

The newly approved Year Three portfolio focuses on high-impact initiatives, including:

- Navajo Tribal Ranchers Grazing and Supplemental Feeding Program
- Agricultural Education Outreach and Scholarships
- Reopening of the Crown Point Field Office
- Aerial Feral Livestock Management Program
- Farm and Garden Incentive Program
- Livestock Genetic Improvement and Wool/Mohair Initiatives
- Permit Probate Advertisement Assistance

According to Jim’s report, the Department of Agriculture has received 82% of the approved \$25.5 million disbursed under Year Three. This includes \$14.1 million in incentive payments, \$5.2 million for departmental projects, and \$1.8 million in grants to local entities. Water Resources followed with 11%, while Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, and Historic Preservation shared the remaining 7%.

A significant 56.3% of funds were channeled into grazing and livestock support, highlighting the program’s core priority. Farming and irrigation projects received 11.7%, while administrative costs and undefined “other” categories together consumed nearly 20%, raising concerns over classification transparency.

Chair Jesus recommended amending the original enabling legislation to reflect the new project list and appropriations. Council Delegate Danny Simpson supported the revised nine-project plan but emphasized the need to secure previously earmarked \$1 million for the Eastern Agency.

“I fully support reallocating the \$5.6 million. But I also want to make sure Eastern Agency doesn’t get left behind. We need to include that \$850,000 in Year Four to honor previous commitments”, said Delegate Danny Simpson.

Jim confirmed what the department will propose Year Four funding before September, aiming for implementation in 2026. She noted that significant groundwork remains, including amending the Fund Management Plan, which expired in 2023, and establishing formal project approval guidelines.

“We’ve inherited a program without clear protocols. Right now, we’re building policies from scratch, based on past experiences, USDA standards, and the input from our grazing committees and local boards,” she said.

“It’s encouraging to see new policies being created for project accountability. The groundwork has been laid for Year Four, and with feasibility studies complete, projects like hay development are ready to move forward”, said Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson.

One major limitation for future expansion includes land withdrawal and design for agency-level agriculture centers, particularly in underserved regions like Western Agency.

The Resources and Development Committee voted four in favor with none opposed in approving the Department of Agriculture’s report.

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