



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

## 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approves Water Resources Trust Fund Expenditure Plan**



**Council Delegate Rickie Nez sponsored Legislation 0025-25.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On the second day of the Spring Session, the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved Legislation 0025-25, approving the Navajo Nation Water Resources Development Trust Fund Expenditure Plan to fund critical projects that will deliver safe drinking water and expand agricultural irrigation.

“This legislation is a promise to our people,” said Council Delegate Rickie Nez, who sponsored the legislation. “It delivers long-overdue access to clean drinking water across the Navajo Nation and irrigation for our farmers in Upper Fruitland. This is a commitment not just to today’s generation but to the generations to come.”

The expenditure plan implements plans for the \$50 million settlement fund to be used by the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources (NNDWR). Originally established to resolve Navajo Nation water rights claims in the San Juan River Basin, the trust fund became available for expenditure in December 2019. The plan was developed by the NNDWR and authorizes the department to oversee its implementation.

The approved plan allocates \$20 million toward increasing the capacity of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project (NGWSP) to deliver water into Arizona through the Four Corners region. This expansion is vital to supporting a proposed water rights settlement for Diné communities in Arizona.

An additional \$5 million will fund connection projects to link the NGWSP with local public water systems along the San Juan and Cutter Laterals. These systems currently depend on groundwater and serve more than 10,000 customers. Improvements will include water storage tanks, pipelines, pump stations, treatment facilities, and supporting infrastructure.

The plan also dedicates \$15 million to the Upper Fruitland Irrigation Project, a major step toward revitalizing agriculture in that region by constructing a new irrigation diversion system.

To improve local infrastructure and public health, \$4.7 million will support water infrastructure improvement projects. These funds will help expand and modernize water and wastewater systems within the NGWSP service area and leverage additional funding sources through cost-sharing efforts.

Recognizing urgent safety concerns from the NNDWR, the plan also sets aside \$2.4 million for a new office facility. The current building in Fort Defiance has been deemed structurally unsafe for workers and unfit for occupancy.

The legislation also allocates \$2.88 million for indirect costs and administrative expenses, along with authorization to use fund income interest for any of the approved project categories without requiring further Navajo Nation Council approval.

Strict guidelines ensure that all withdrawn funds are used exclusively for water resource development. The plan prohibits per capita distributions and restricts money withdrawal by any Navajo Nation leader or employee and is strictly to be spent on projects directly tied to water delivery, irrigation, or conservation in line with the settlement agreement.

The NNDWR is tasked with administering the funds, including design, construction, and oversight of the projects. An annual report on expenditures and activities will be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior, the Office of the President and Vice President, the Navajo Nation Council, and the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

“This plan represents a landmark investment in our people’s health, food security, and future,” Delegate Nez said. “We are taking control of our water, our land, and our future.”

The 25th Navajo Nation Council approved the legislation with 18 votes in favor, none opposed, the Navajo Nation Council is final authority of this legislation.

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