



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 11, 2026**

## **Health, Education, and Human Services receives report on water access assessment initiative**



**Health, Education, and Human Services received a report outlining the Household Water Assessment Initiative.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) received a report from the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service (IHS) regarding a new initiative to assess homes across the Navajo Nation that lack piped water and wastewater services.

The presentation outlined the development of the Household Water Assessment Initiative, a community-engaged effort designed to identify homes without reliable water infrastructure and determine eligibility for sanitation facility construction services. The initiative builds upon previous research conducted through the Diné Household Water Survey, which collected detailed information on water access conditions in the Fort Defiance and Chinle agencies.

HEHSC Chair Vince R. James said the committee welcomed the report as part of broader efforts to address longstanding infrastructure gaps across the Navajo Nation.

“The goal is to streamline the process so we can get water to families faster. For many of our communities, hauling water remains a daily reality. Improving coordination and identifying homes that need service will help move these projects forward,” said Chair James.

Presenters explained that many Diné families continue to experience water insecurity despite decades of infrastructure development efforts. Preliminary findings from the survey indicate that approximately 26.5% of surveyed households in the Fort Defiance Agency do not have piped water, while 41.3% of households reported hauling water within the past year, often traveling long distances to access water sources.

HEHSC Vice Chair Germaine Simonson said the assessment initiative will provide valuable information for decision-makers working to improve water infrastructure.

“Reliable data about where the needs are will help us prioritize projects and direct resources to the communities that need them most. This work will help ensure our families receive the water services they deserve,” said Vice Chair Simonson.

John Hopkins representatives reported that the survey has already conducted nearly 1,000 household interviews and water quality tests in 200 homes. The work includes mapping household locations, assessing water access conditions, and identifying barriers to reliable water infrastructure.

Delegates raised concerns about the urgency of improving water access and the need for greater coordination between federal agencies, tribal programs, and local chapters.

Council Delegate George Tolth stressed that future planning must include all regions of the Navajo Nation, particularly remote communities in the Eastern Agency.

“We need to make sure this effort covers the entire Navajo Nation. Our communities in the eastern region are still waiting for reliable water access, and we want to ensure they are part of the solution moving forward,” said Delegate Tolth.

Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez also emphasized the importance of transparency and communication with local communities as the initiative moves forward.

“When projects like this move forward, our chapters and residents need to understand what is happening and where the projects stand. Clear communication and accessible information will help communities stay engaged and informed,” said Delegate Nez.

Committee members also discussed establishing a technical advisory committee to improve coordination among tribal programs, federal agencies, and nonprofit partners working on water infrastructure projects across the Navajo Nation. The methodology for the household assessment initiative is currently being developed and will be presented for review later this year. The assessment is intended to eventually expand across all 110 chapters of the Navajo Nation.

The HEHSC accepted the report with a vote of five in favor and none opposed.

###