



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

MEDIA CONTACT:
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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Resources and Development Committee reviews proposed amendments to Title 3 with Navajo Department of Agriculture and grazing officials



Resources and Development Committee Chair Brenda Jesus said the proposed Title 3 amendments strengthen land stewardship for future generations.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Friday, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) met with the Navajo Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Farm Board members, District Grazing Committees, and land management officials to review proposed amendments to Title 3 of the Navajo Nation Code.

The RDC has prioritized amending Title 3 to address longstanding challenges faced by Navajo grazing permittees and farmers by improving clarity, accountability, and local decision-making authority.

“We need to change the mentality of our people when it comes to land use permits and grazing rights,” said RDC Chairwoman Brenda Jesus. “A homesite lease, grazing permit, or agricultural land use permit does not mean we own the land—it means we hold a leasehold interest and must work within the law. These amendments are about educating our people, protecting our farmers and permittees, and strengthening land stewardship for future generations.”

The meeting focused on reforms to agricultural land use permits, Farm Board operations, District Grazing Committee authority, Land Board structure, and Navajo Nation ranch management.

The amendments focus on strengthening Farm Boards in irrigation project areas by updating

definitions, expanding duties, and clarifying oversight. Revisions modernize definitions of farmland, dryland farming, project farms, and irrigation systems while reaffirming Farm Board authority over Agricultural Land Use Permits (ALUPs).

The amendments establish clearer operational standards, including officer duties, meeting schedules, reporting requirements, and compensation structures. Required reporting would include biannual crop reports and quarterly accountability reports to the Department of Agriculture and RDC, along with updated stipends for meetings, trainings, and travel.

For smaller irrigation projects and dryland farming areas, the amendments clarify the authority of District Grazing Committees and District 15 Land Boards, which would continue overseeing permit applications, recommendations, conservation planning, and permit cancellations for non-use or non-compliance.

Proposed revisions also strengthen fencing approvals, dispute mediation, appeals through the Office of Hearings and Appeals, and compliance requirements such as valid permits and livestock inventories when needed.

“We have to take a hard look at these issues,” said Council Delegate Otto Tso. “We continue to see serious conflicts over grazing permits and irrigation water, including threats against grazing officials. We need to determine what should remain under BIA and federal CFR administration until we are prepared to move forward with local control, including 638 contracting for grazing and farm management.”

The review also includes updates to the District Land Board system in the Eastern Agency, expanding from three to four boards and updating representation across Districts 15, 16, 19, 20, and 21.

District Land Boards would continue overseeing grazing permits, range management, livestock trespass enforcement, conservation planning, and dispute resolution. The Joint Land Board would remain the appeals body and continue recommending grazing fees and off-reservation grazing policy updates.

Another section addresses Navajo Nation Ranch Program reforms, updating leasing authority, operations, payment systems, and enforcement procedures for off-reservation ranch leases. The Navajo Nation President, Department of Agriculture, and RDC would continue overseeing lease approvals, while clarifying terms, maintenance responsibilities, fee collection, delinquency procedures, and deferments during drought or emergencies.

“I want to thank the BIA, my colleagues on the RDC, NNDOJ, the Department of Agriculture, grazing representatives, and the Land and Farm Boards for their work on these long-awaited amendments,” said Chair Jesus. “I am hopeful that, working together with the RDC and the 25th Navajo Nation Council, we will get these amendments across the finish line.”

The proposed amendments aim to align Navajo agricultural law with current needs while preserving traditional land stewardship and strengthening local authority.

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