



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Resources and Development Committee advances \$34 million drought response package to strengthen water security and agricultural resilience



RDC Chairwoman Benda Jesus said the measure addresses prolonged drought conditions that threaten water availability for Diné communities.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) advanced legislation that would appropriate more than \$34 million from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance (UUFb) to support emergency drought response and mitigation efforts across the Navajo Nation. The legislation addresses prolonged drought conditions that continue to threaten water availability, livestock operations, agriculture, public safety, and the overall well-being of Diné communities.

RDC Chairwoman Brenda Jesus supported the legislation, emphasizing that drought has placed increasing pressure on Navajo farmers, ranchers, and rural communities that depend on reliable water sources to sustain their livelihoods.

“Drought continues to impact families, livestock, and agricultural operations across the Navajo Nation. As conditions become more severe, we have a responsibility to invest in practical, long-term solutions that strengthen our water infrastructure and provide meaningful assistance to our farmers and ranchers. This funding package is about protecting our communities today while building greater resilience for the future,” said Chairwoman Jesus.

Legislation No. 0176-26 proposes appropriating funds to the Division of Natural Resources and related entities for projects that include livestock feed assistance, agricultural infrastructure improvements, water hauling support, rehabilitation and construction of water infrastructure, wildlife water systems, restoration of windmills on the Navajo Partitioned Lands, and irrigation system improvements along the San Juan River.

The measure also waives certain fiscal restrictions to allow the funding to remain available until the projects are completed, recognizing that drought recovery extends beyond a single fiscal year. The legislation cites the Navajo Nation's State of Emergency declaration, Stage 2 fire restrictions, and longstanding drought contingency planning as justification for immediate investment.

Legislation sponsor Speaker Crystalne Curley said the proposal represents a proactive investment in protecting Navajo communities from increasingly severe drought conditions.

"Drought is no longer a seasonal challenge. It is a long-term reality that requires decisive action and sustained investment. This legislation strengthens our ability to protect water resources, support the families who depend on farming and ranching, and build infrastructure that will serve our communities for generations to come. By investing in water security today, we are preparing the Nation to meet future challenges with resilience," said Speaker Curley.

The funding package allocates \$9.45 million to the Department of Agriculture for livestock feed assistance, farm and ranch infrastructure improvements, irrigation repairs, and drought mitigation programs; \$15.47 million to the Department of Water Resources for water infrastructure improvements and emergency water projects; \$600,000 to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for climate adaptation and wildlife water infrastructure; \$7.5 million to restore and rehabilitate windmills serving 15 Navajo Partitioned Lands chapters; and \$1 million to the San Juan River Diné Water Users to support irrigation operations and agricultural water delivery.

The legislation also requires quarterly progress reports to the Resources and Development Committee to ensure accountability and oversight throughout project implementation.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0176-26 on the consent agenda with a vote of five in favor and none opposed. The legislation now advances to the Budget and Finance Committee for further consideration.

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