



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2024

Resources and Development Committee Discusses Agriculture Initiatives and Farm Plot Utilization



Photo left to right: Delegate Rickie Nez, Delegate Danny Simpson, Delegate Shawna Ann Claw, and Chair Brenda Jesus

Window Rock, Ariz. – During a Special Meeting of the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) on May 7, the RDC conducted discussions led by key presenters and governing bodies, primarily focused on improving the efficiency and usage of the Navajo Nation’s agricultural resources.

Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw (Chinle) expressed concern over the current management of Navajo agricultural projects, stressing the need for improved collaboration. “This is a concern for the RDC. We need to have a joint work session with the LOC to assess processes for issues presented today, but we were glad to have been presented with this update. For me, being a new member of RDC, this was the first time I heard updates on certain issues,” stated Claw.

A report presented by the Division of Natural Resources, Division Director Mike Halona, addressed issues concerning unspent funds within K Accounts. The report highlighted a significant number of allocated resources yet to be utilized, underscoring a need for a strategic reallocation to ensure the Division’s objectives are met. Transparency and ongoing communication with the RDC were emphasized as critical to maintaining accountability.

The San Juan River Farm Board, led by Chair Tracy Raymond, presented a report on the underutilized farm plots in his region and the remnants of hemp farm operations that were abandoned by former hemp farmer Dineh Benally. The board underscored the urgency of resolving these issues to prevent the misuse of resources and to optimize land use for agricultural productivity.

Chair Raymond's presentation highlighted the challenges he faces in prompting effective governance responses. Raymond called upon the RDC to help address his concerns in cleaning up the defunct operations.

RDC Chair Brenda Jesus (Oaksprings, St. Michaels) voiced a vision for revitalizing agriculture across the Navajo Nation. "One of the biggest concerns that I have right now is that throughout the greater parts of the Navajo Nation, there is very little farming activity going on. It's hard to put forth farming initiatives, like hosting farmer's markets across the Nation, where our people can get fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruits from the backyards of our local communities."

RDC Vice Chair Casey Allen Johnson (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Birdsprings, Leupp, Tolani Lake) supported the need for self-sufficiency in food security through local agricultural initiatives. "We need to push for alfalfa hay field projects and agriculture projects so we can have self-sufficiency in food security. We all depend on corporate grocery stores to provide food for our families and ourselves. My goal is to expand opportunities to implement food systems, home-grown food, that could flourish in our communities."

The RDC continues to strive towards effective resource management and agricultural self-reliance, aiming to address both current inefficiencies in funding opportunities and agricultural projects through enhanced governance and direct engagement with local farmers and ranchers.

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