



**NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT
RUSSELL BEGAYE | JONATHAN NEZ**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Navajo Nation Press Shop
press@operationyellowwater.com

OCTOBER 2, 2015

BEGAYE REQUESTS FEMA PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye yesterday formally requested a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in response to the Gold King Mine spill. A Preliminary Damage Assessment is the first step in the application process for public assistance for recovery from a disaster for eligible applicants.

“The spill caused damage to the water quality of the San Juan River to such a massive extent that a state of emergency was declared by the Navajo Nation,” wrote President Begaye in a letter to EPA Associate Administrator Elizabeth Zimmerman. “All of the economic, health, cultural and other impacts to the Navajo people are not yet known. Given the significance of the San Juan River to the health, welfare economy, and culture of our Nation and people, the Navajo Nation, as a federally recognized Indian tribe, officially and specifically requests a mission assignment for Technical Assistance to complete a Preliminary Damage Assessment for damages as sustained as a result of the Gold King Mine spill.”

Last month, FEMA rejected the Navajo Nation’s request for the appointment of a disaster-recovery coordinator to direct the federal government’s response to the crisis. During his testimony before Congress following the decision, President Begaye called on the federal government, and specially FEMA, to provide greater support to address the disaster caused by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spill.

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR FULL LETTER TO FEMA

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THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

October 01, 2015

Elizabeth A. Zimmerman
Associate Administrator
Office of Response and Recovery
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Through: Robert J. Fenton
Regional Administrator
Region IX
1100 Broadway, Suite 1200
Oakland, CA 94607.

Subject: REQUEST FOR PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Dear Ms. Zimmerman,

On Wednesday, August 5, 2015, the United States Environmental Protection Agency was conducting work at the Gold King Mine in Silverton, Colorado that led to a rupture resulting in the release of an estimated 3 million gallons of toxic mine waste into Cement Creek and its tributaries, the Animas River and the San Juan River (the "River"). The River runs along approximately 250 miles of the northern border of the Navajo Nation.

The spill caused damage to the water quality of the River to such a massive extent that a state of emergency was declared by the Navajo Nation on Saturday, August 8, 2015, a mere day after the Nation learned of the spill and a day after the President established an Incident Command to respond to the spill; Declaration of Emergency, Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice-President. *See Enclosure A.* The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management also declared a state of emergency on Sunday, August 9, 2015; Declaration of Emergency, Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management. *See Enclosure B.* The Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management within the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety activated the Navajo Emergency Operation Center that same day (August 9).

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The primary uses of the San Juan River by the Navajo Nation include water for human use, irrigation for farms, water for livestock, and recreational uses, among others. Farming and ranching are the backbone of our culture and economy, and are both heavily dependent on the San Juan River. Indeed, in our arid region with little water distribution infrastructure in place, our farmers rely heavily on the San Juan River and ditch irrigation practices to keep their fields hydrated and their crops growing. Our farmers mostly live on their farmlands and consume their crops as a matter of subsistence. These families have lost a significant portion of a full growing season's worth of work. The Navajo Nation already faces a daunting unemployment rate of 42 percent. Along the San Juan River, many of our people have been able to make a life for themselves and support their families through farming and ranching. Their livelihoods as well as their growing cycles and field rotations have been disrupted. Farmers who are used to producing their own farm goods will now need to buy fruits and vegetables for themselves, and hay and alfalfa for their livestock, to replace what was lost. Our farmers will also lose income from the expected sales that did not or will not occur. Even farmers who have been able to salvage their farm goods now face a stigma developing with respect to fruits and vegetables grown along the San Juan River.

We also have significant concerns regarding the health impacts of the spill. Heavy metals like lead, arsenic and others that were discharged during the spill are known to be dangerous to humans, animals, and plants. These metals persist in the environment and are particularly harmful to fetuses and children. To provide a sense of the magnitude of exposure to these harmful metals just from the spill, one report of EPA data indicated that lead was found near the Cement Creek/Animas River confluence "at more than 200 times higher than the acute exposure limit for aquatic life, and 3,580 times higher than federal standards for human drinking water." And arsenic was found "more than 24 times the exposure limit for fish and 823 times the level for human ingestion."¹ Human consumption of farm products and livestock raised on contaminated water is therefore of grave concern. Although USEPA has stated that surface water has returned to its previous condition, we are concerned that many of the contaminants have merely settled to the bed of the River, and will be resuspended in our San Juan River water later, such as during storm events.

The Nation's impacts are felt most pointedly in the disruption of our cultural principle of *hozho*, which encompasses beauty, order, and harmony, and expresses the idea of striving to maintain balance in the Navajo universe. We connect to our land, our water, and each other through ceremonies and gatherings. We grow four types of corn, each used for a specific purpose in our ceremonies, and those seeds are protected by the strong culture of farming that has persisted in the San Juan River Basin. Navajo cornhusks are mixed with tobacco to create ceremonial smoke,

¹ <http://m.startribune.com/nation/321518301.html>

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and our corn pollen is used as an essential element in all Navajo ceremonies. One of our corn seed strains is utilized in our critical *kinaalda* ceremonies (the coming of age ceremonies for our women). We also grow an array of heirloom fruits and vegetables that our people eagerly anticipate selling and purchasing during our popular fair season each fall. Those fruits and vegetables are shared over family tables, and are a part of the cultural glue that keeps our families and way of life intact. Families travel for hours across the Nation to the San Juan River Basin to access these ingredients for our ceremonies and celebrations. But the spill destroyed many of these crops so critical to our prayers, ceremonies, and our way of life.

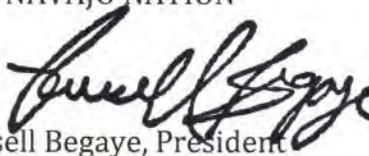
The impairment of the River and the adverse impacts to our farmers and ranchers, and our community as a whole, will mark a moment of community trauma that will be endured for years to come. This new trauma will compound our already significant historical trauma, and raises new and troubling public health concerns. Already four suicides have occurred in affected communities along the River. Our Department of Health is researching the connection of the suicides to the spill, and we are concerned that these might be the first of a larger cluster. Indeed, two additional suicides have occurred in an area south of the affected area, resulting in a total of six post-spill suicides on the Nation. This tragedy affects all of our Nation because so many of us have relatives in Northern Navajo. We will be dealing with the effects of this spill for decades and rebuilding the shattered sense of self so many of our people are experiencing as a result of this disaster.

All of the economic, health, cultural, and other impacts to the Navajo people are not yet known. Given the significance of the San Juan River to the health, welfare, economy, and culture of our Nation and people, the Navajo Nation, as a federally recognized Indian tribe, officially and specifically requests a mission assignment for Technical Assistance to complete a Preliminary Damage Assessment for damages sustained as a direct result of the Gold King Mine spill.

If you have any further questions or need clarification regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Rosalita Whitehair at our Emergency Operations Center at (505) 371-8415/8416/8417. We look forward to your favorable decision.

Sincerely,

THE NAVAJO NATION


Russell Begaye, President

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Enclosures:

- Enclosure A Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice-President Declaration of Emergency as it relates to the Gold King Mine Spill.*
- Enclosure B Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management Declaration of Emergency as it relates to the Gold King Mine Spill.*



NAVAJO NATION DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Ethel B. Branch
ATTORNEY GENERAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

press@operationyellowwater.com

October 5, 2015

**ATTORNEY GENERAL BRANCH ASKS EPA TO ASSURE FAIR SATISFACTION OF
MINE SPILL CLAIMS**

Window Rock – On Friday, Navajo Attorney General Ethel Branch formally requested that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) assure full and fair satisfaction of all claims, known and unknown, against the agency following the Gold King Mine spill.

“The USEPA has repeatedly expressed that it accepts responsibility for the spill, and that it will compensate people for the harms caused by the spill. Yet the process that the USEPA has set up to resolve claims appears to jeopardize the rights of the Navajo People,” said Attorney General Branch. “This puts our people in a precarious position because they need immediate recovery from known damages.”

Days after President Russell Begaye announced that the Navajo Nation intended to sue the USEPA, the organization sent staff to encourage the Navajo people to sign forms to expedite the settlement of their claims. The forms contained a significant limiting clause that, despite assurances from the USEPA, could limit or waive the future rights of claimants.

In a letter sent to USEPA General Counsel Avi Garbow on Friday, Attorney General Branch made the following requests of the embattled agency:

An interim claims process be implemented that will allow members of the Navajo Nation to seek ongoing compensation for approximated and realized damages during the two-year limitation period under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA).

Claims asserted by the Navajo people are promptly processed and paid on a rolling basis.

The office of the USEPA General Counsel of the US Department of Justice issue guidance that makes clear that accepting monetary recovery under the FTCA does not constitute a release of claims for damages not yet known to the claimant.

“We need to assure our people, who are concerned for their futures, that their injuries will not go ignored. To that end, the Navajo Nation asks the US Department of Justice to issue guidance confirming that acceptance of a settlement for asserted damages during the two-year period after the spill does not constitute a release of claims under the FTCA for any injuries and damages not yet known,” wrote Attorney General Branch.

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NAVAJO NATION DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

ETHEL B. BRANCH
ATTORNEY GENERAL

RODGERICK T. BEGAY
ACTING DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

VIA EMAIL: Garbo.Avi@epa.gov

October 02, 2015

Mr. Avi Garbow
General Counsel
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the General Counsel
Mail Code: 2310A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Mr. Garbow:

I write on behalf of the Navajo Nation and its people to assure full and fair satisfaction of all claims against the USEPA related to the Gold King Mine spill—both known and yet unknown. In order to address the magnitude of the harms experienced by the Navajo from the unprecedented Gold King Mine spill, I am writing to request that:

- 1.) an interim claims process be implemented that will allow members of the Navajo Nation to seek ongoing compensation for approximated and realized damages during the two-year limitations period under the Federal Tort Claims Act (“FTCA”);
- 2.) claims asserted by the Navajo people are promptly processed and paid on a rolling basis; and
- 3.) you or the U.S. Department of Justice issue guidance that makes clear that accepting monetary recovery under the FTCA does not constitute a release of claims for damages not yet known to the claimant.

On August 5, 2015, the USEPA and other responsible parties caused a massive spill of contaminated water from the Gold King Mine into the Animas and San Juan rivers. This disaster has already had a devastating impact on the Navajo Nation because the San Juan River is so fundamental to our way of life. Many of our farmers and ranchers lost their sole source of income. Crops were destroyed and livestock put at risk. But the extent of the damage is largely unknown at this point, and it is expected that the impacts from this incident—economic, health, cultural, and spiritual impacts—will be felt on the Nation for years to come.

The USEPA has repeatedly expressed that it accepts responsibility for the spill, and that it will compensate people for the harms caused by the spill. Yet the process that the USEPA has set up to resolve claims appears to jeopardize the rights of the Nation’s people. Notably, just days after President Begaye announced that the Nation intended to sue the USEPA, the USEPA

mobilized staff at the Navajo Nation to hand out Standard Form 95 and encourage people to fill out the forms to expedite settlement of their claims pursuant to the FTCA. These forms contain a significant limiting clause, which immediately precedes the signature block, as follows:

I CERTIFY THAT THE AMOUNT OF CLAIM COVERS ONLY
DAMAGES AND INJURIES CAUSED BY THE INCIDENT
ABOVE AND ACCEPT SAID AMOUNT IN FULL
SATISFACTION AND FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THIS
CLAIM.

The USEPA claims on its website that this language does not limit or waive future rights of the claimants.

This puts our people in a precarious position because they need immediate recovery for known damages. Individuals have lost their sources of income and are struggling to provide for their families. Thus, many are eager to make their claims to secure immediate funds to address pressing financial stress. However, they do not want to assert claims if they risk forgoing future, more comprehensive recovery.

To address this problem, we believe that an interim claims process must be set up that will allow for ongoing claims and quick remuneration as approximate damages are realized, but which will not prevent future claims as further damages become known and quantified. I understand from Sylvia Quast, Regional Counsel for the Pacific Southwest at the USEPA, that this sort of ongoing recovery process has been implemented before.

The Navajo Nation also needs assurance that the USEPA, having accepted responsibility for the spill, will compensate the Nation and its people for long-term, future damages. Indeed, the long-term health and economic impacts of the spill, among other impacts, are not yet known and not yet quantifiable. We believe under the law that the two-year limitations period on these unknown claims would not be triggered until the actual injury is discovered. But we need to assure our people, who are concerned for their futures, that their injuries will not go ignored. To that end, the Navajo Nation asks the USDOJ to issue guidance confirming that acceptance of a settlement for asserted damages during the two-year period after the spill does not constitute a release of claims under the FTCA for any injuries and damages not yet known.

To help facilitate the interim claims process, I enclose a proposed claim form based on Standard Form 95 that has been approved by the Navajo Nation Department of Justice to clarify and ensure that the Nation's people will not waive their rights to make future claims. We look forward to working together to assure complete and fair recovery to the Navajo Nation and its people.

Very truly yours,



Ethel Branch, Attorney General

Enclosure



NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT
RUSSELL BEGAYE | JONATHAN NEZ

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 8, 2015

**BEGAYE APPLAUDS MCCAIN AND FLAKE CALL FOR SWIFT REVIEW OF NAVAJO
EMERGENCY DECLARATION REQUEST**

WINDOW ROCK – President Russell Begaye today applauded Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) for asking the White House to acknowledge the Navajo Nation’s formal request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine spill. In a letter sent to President Barack Obama yesterday, the senators urged the president to swiftly review and respond to the Navajo Nation’s request. President Obama has not commented on the devastating impact of the Gold King Mine spill and the White House has not responded to the numerous requests for Federal support to address this crisis.

“I applaud Senators McCain and Flake for urging President Obama to swiftly review and respond to our request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine Spill caused by the actions of the United States Department of Environmental Affairs. This disaster has culturally and economically devastated our Nation and inflicted an enormous amount of pain and suffering on our people.

“President Obama has not only been slow to respond to our request for additional assistance, he has not acknowledged the damage that the U.S. EPA and other responsible parties have caused to the Navajo Nation. We need greater support from the Obama Administration to help our people recover from this crisis, and I thank Senators McCain and Flake for championing our cause.”

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NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT
RUSSELL BEGAYE | JONATHAN NEZ

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 9, 2015

**BEGAYE APPLAUDS NEW MEXICO DELEGATION CALL FOR PROMPT ACTION ON
NAVAJO EMERGENCY DECLARATION REQUEST**

WINDOW ROCK – President Russell Begaye today applauded members of the New Mexico congressional delegation for asking the White House to act on the Navajo Nation’s formal request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine spill. In a letter sent to President Barack Obama yesterday, Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and Representatives Steve Pearce, Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham urged the president to take prompt action on the Navajo Nation’s request.

“I applaud Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and Representatives Steve Pearce, Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham for calling for prompt action on our request for an Emergency Declaration due to the Gold King Mine Spill. This disaster has culturally and economically devastated our Nation and inflicted an enormous amount of pain and suffering on our people.

“We need greater support from the Obama Administration to address the crisis and protect the livelihood of our farmers. We hope that President Obama will listen to the bipartisan calls from members of the Arizona and New Mexico delegations to act quickly on our Emergency Declaration request.”

Earlier this week, Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake sent a separate letter to President Obama asking for a swift review of the Navajo Nation’s request.

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Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 8, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We respectfully request that you take prompt action on Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye's request for an emergency declaration as a result of the Gold King Mine spill accident that occurred on August 5, 2015.

The mine spill released more than three million gallons of toxic waste that flowed into the Animas and San Juan Rivers. The San Juan River runs along the northern border of the Navajo Nation for approximately 250 miles. The toxic contaminants directly impacted 13 Navajo Chapters and serious concerns remain about the long-term public health and economic challenges caused by this extremely serious spill.

Recovering from this incident will require a full and coordinated approach. Given the complexity of this disaster, we request a thorough response to the Navajo Nation's request for a Presidential emergency declaration. We would further request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency provide adequate technical assistance for tribal officials to identify all available federal assistance to effectively respond to this emergency and to protect the Navajo Nation's public health and safety.

Native communities deserve full and complete protection of their water, land, and livelihoods. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Steve Pearce
United States Representative



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Representative



Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

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October 9, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye and Vice President Nez offer Condolences for Student Killed in NAU Shooting

“The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) is deeply saddened by news of a Northern Arizona University (NAU) student killed in a shooting incident that took place on NAU campus early Friday morning. All life is sacred and the loss of any life is tragic. Both Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are offering prayers for all those involved and affected by this terrible tragedy,” said President Russell Begaye.

“We want to thank the NAU Police Department and Flagstaff Police Department for responding in a rapid manner. We also want to encourage any students or faculty who have suffered trauma because of the shooting to seek counseling services as they see fit,” said Vice President Nez. “In this time of tragedy, the Navajo Nation stands by the university and mourns the tragic loss of an NAU student.”

President Begaye noted that many Navajo students attend NAU and both he and Vice President Nez are concerned about their safety and protection.

“In light of this shooting, OPVP would ask NAU to heighten security measures to further protect the lives of all students attending the university,” he said.

NAUPD responded to a call of shots fired at 1:20 a.m. The isolated incident took place in a parking lot on the northeast end of the NAU campus. One person was killed and three others were injured. A suspect has been apprehended and is currently in custody with the Flagstaff Police Department.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez will visit NAU on Sunday, Oct. 11 at 6 p.m. MST at the NAU Native American Cultural Center, Building 14, to meet with Native students and faculty. For more information contact Kathleen Frank at (928) 523-6229.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

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October 11, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indian Gaming is critical to upholding Statewide Programs and Services says President Begaye

AK CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY- Through revenue sharing, Arizona gaming tribes directly impact statewide programs and services, said President Russell Begaye at the Arizona Indian Gaming Association Tribal Leaders Meeting held at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino on Friday, Oct. 9.

“Revenue sharing from gaming tribes in Arizona continues to support education statewide. The revenue we share contributes to increasing teacher’s salaries,” President Begaye said. “We provide funds to help students stay in school and not drop out. Our gaming dollars go toward improving instruction in Arizona school classrooms.”

When state voters passed Proposition 202, gaming tribes in Arizona agreed to volunteer a portion of shared gaming revenues with the state of Arizona and local governments to support specific state and local programs.

Twelve percent of the total monies is directed to city, town and county governments for government services benefitting the general public. An additional 9% funds the State’s regulatory expenses.

The remainder is contributed to the Arizona Benefits Fund. Of that fund, 56% of the shared revenues is directed to educational programs and needs; 28% funds emergency services and trauma centers; 7% funds wildlife and habitat conservation; 7% funds statewide tourism promotion; and 2% supports the education, prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

Since 2002, Tribal Gaming has contributed over \$1 billion in total revenues to Arizona.

“We should be proud of this and people across the state need to remember this. They need to know that Indian tribes are supporting their programs, services, schools and hospitals,” President Begaye said.

During the Tribal Leaders Meeting, discussion focused on the Tohono O’odham Nation’s proposed Glendale Casino. Tribes spoke on both sides of the issue with consideration toward how the outcome will affect Indian gaming in the state.

“Tribes themselves benefit from Indian gaming, even those without casinos. Through Indian gaming, tribes have more money than they had before Proposition 202 came about,” President Begaye said. “Sometimes we lose focus and start to look inward at what we might lose rather than how we can increase revenue to share with the state. This revenue is critical to promoting economic development, employment and contributing to statewide programs and services.”

Through gaming, tribes have been able to provide, or supplement, funding toward their own programs and services. Within tribal lands, gaming money benefits tribal education, health programs, housing, public safety and employment among many other services.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

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October 11, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye encouraged by House action on Native energy bill

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye applauded House passage of HR 538, the Native American Energy Act, introduced by Rep. Don Young, (R-Alaska). The bill streamlines federal regulations surrounding energy development requirements on Native lands. President Begaye urged the Senate to take swift action to pass a tribal energy bill that would increase economic development, create jobs and give tribes the flexibility they require to best meet the needs of their communities.

“This bill will help our people regain governance over resources on our own lands. In particular, Section 8 of the bill authorizes the Nation to negotiate and enter into mineral leases without the time, monetary, and sovereignty cost of review and approval by the Interior secretary for actions on our own lands. The current leasing approval process is rife with delays and can serve as a major and unnecessary impediment for energy and job growth in Indian Country,” said President Begaye.

Navajo Nation Reps. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.), and Steve Pearce (R-N.M.), voted for the bill, while Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), and Michelle Grisham-Lujan, (D-N.M.), voted against the bill.

The White House opposed the bill saying it would “undermine public participation and transparency of review of projects on Indian lands under the National Environmental Policy Act.” The White House also noted, “the bill’s changes to mineral leasing laws applicable to the Navajo Nation lands may adversely affect energy development on those lands.” Despite this concern, the Navajo Oil and Gas Company has come out in support of the Navajo leasing amendments.

On June 15, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that found the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ management shortcomings has hindered Indian energy development. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs will hold an oversight hearing on Oct. 21, 2015 on the report and Indian energy development. President Begaye looks forward to this hearing and urges the White House to consider support for this bill, which is aligned with the administration’s historic support for tribal self-governance and sovereignty.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Nation and the National Congress of American Indians also strongly support the bill.

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THE NAVAJO NATION

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**October 12, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

President Begaye and Vice President Nez tell NAU Students to maintain focus

FLAGSTAFF-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez told Northern Arizona University (NAU) students to maintain their focus and take care of themselves in these days after a tragic campus shooting left one NAU student dead and three injured.

“Campus is usually a family and NAU is no different. You are family and it’s good that you came together tonight,” President Begaye told the students and faculty. “When tragic things happen in your life, you have to remember to take care of yourself, first and foremost.”

In recollecting on teachings his family has passed along, President Begaye said it’s important to “keep your thoughts holy”.

“There is purpose for your continued education and that is to grow your thoughts, knowledge and philosophy on life,” he said. “Think positively and don’t put bad thoughts into your mind.”

Students and faculty gathered on Oct. 12 at the Native American Cultural Center, Building 17, on NAU campus to meet with President Begaye and Vice President Nez. The meeting focused on reinforcing morale with the students and consoling those who were affected by the shooting.

“As an alumni of NAU, this event really shocked me,” Vice President Nez said. “This tragedy really hit home having happened at my alma mater. It’s heartbreaking.”

With Monday, Oct. 12, starting a new week of classes post-tragedy, Vice President Nez said he and President Begaye wanted to let the students know that they are not alone. They are a part of a larger family in all NAU students and alumni.

“There is a lot of wisdom in the alumni here. If there is anything you’re going through, whether it stems from this tragedy or not, you should talk with them,” he said. “We all know it’s tough going through college. Persevere and don’t give up.”

President Begaye and Vice President Nez were joined at the meeting by NAU President Rita Cheng and Advisor to the President Dr. Joe Martin. The meeting was organized by Kathleen Frank of the Native American Cultural Center and was filled to capacity with students and faculty.

The President and Vice President would like to extend their gratitude to the students, faculty and NAU President Cheng for welcoming them to the university.



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October 13, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

President Begaye Supports Congressman Grijalva's Bill to put a Moratorium on Uranium Mining in Grand Canyon

FLAGSTAFF—"I support the Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument Act for one simple reason: it prevents uranium mining on the lands selected to be part of the Monument," President Russell Begaye said during a press conference introducing the bill.

Arizona 3rd District Congressman Raul Grijalva introduced The Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument bill on Monday, Oct. 12 at a press conference held at the Museum of Northern Arizona Easton's Collection Center.

A significant focus of the bill is to put a permanent moratorium on new uranium mining claims in the Grand Canyon region. The bill would stop lawsuits that try to overturn a temporary moratorium.

The bill also promotes a collaborative relationship between the tribes involved in the development, implementation and oversight of a management plan for a national monument.

"Sometimes when proclamations are made under the Antiquities Act regarding something as large as the Grand Canyon, tribes are put in the backseat," said Congressman Grijalva. "This bill promotes a collaborative working relationship and brings the Antiquities Act back to front and center with Native tribes."

President Begaye said that uranium mining on the Navajo Nation has left devastating impacts on the Navajo people and their lands. The history of uranium mining on the Nation is long and its effects are often untold or neglected. The Navajo people are left to deal with the legacy of chronic and critical illnesses.

A birth cohort study is occurring on the Nation to look at the effects of uranium mining, President Begaye said. Preliminary results of the study indicate that birth defects and other health issues are related to exposure to radioactive material.

"On the Navajo Nation, our people are dying from various forms of cancer. We believe many are directly related to the uranium mining of the 1940s through the 80s, and the leftover tailings from the uranium mill processing sites," President Begaye said. "The effects from uranium mining are real and must be prevented."

In 2005, the Navajo Nation Council passed the Dine Natural Resources Protection Act, which is a moratorium on uranium mining on Navajo Indian Country. Representative Grijalva's proposed Monument bill is a furtherance of the work begun by the Navajo Nation.

"The ban on uranium claims and mining have motivated me to support this effort," he said. "Our intention is that no one else will have to suffer from the effects of uranium mining and that everyone remembers that the Nation is still cleaning up from the cold war motivated uranium mining."

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THE NAVAJO NATION

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October 14, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Talk is over and action is needed now on the Former Bennett Freeze Area says President Begaye

WINDOW ROCK-President Russell Begaye said it's time for action in developing the Former Bennett Freeze Area for Navajo residents.

The Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) and division directors will tour the area on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 15 and 16.

"Over the years there have been numerous studies done on the Former Bennett Freeze Area. Departments and programs have talked about putting infrastructure in place, putting housing up for residents or providing electricity and water," President Begaye said. "However, nothing has really taken place. Up until this point it's all been talk and no action."

Vice President Jonathan Nez agreed and said it's time to stop studying the area and start acting.

Realizing concerns of Former Bennett Freeze Area residents in a completely tangible way is a priority of the Begaye-Nez administration.

"Our motivation is to hear directly from the impacted people. Their cries have gone on for far too long," President Begaye said.

The Bennett Freeze was enacted by Robert L. Bennett in 1966 to address an ongoing land dispute between the Navajo and Hopi Tribes. In 2009, President Obama repealed the law that created the freeze. The period in between left the area stagnant to development with residents in homes or make-shift housing without water or electricity.

"Our people's homes and corrals have needed upgrades but the freeze prohibited it. For 40 years, our people had to secretly make repairs to their homes. There were no improvements for electricity, plumbing, or clean drinking water," Vice President Nez said. "Our people have been forced to live in 1966 for 40 years."

Bringing leadership to the table with residents is a way of empowering the people to have immediate involvement in the process.

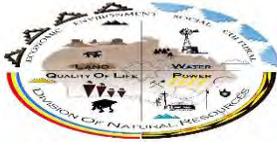
"Family needs to be involved. Community needs to be involved," he said. "We need to build families and reinstitute the old way of life where we support one another. It's nothing new, it's a Native concept. We need to return to that way of life."

President Begaye has committed his entire executive branch to focus on the area.

"Too many promises have been made over the last forty-nine years and I think our people are beginning not to believe what they hear," he said. "We want to let our people know that we are going to do something that should have been done years ago."

The tour of the Former Bennett Freeze Area and consultation with residents will depart from the Tolani Lake Chapter House on Thursday, Oct. 15 at 9:30 a.m.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 20, 2015

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – A safe and fun event for the youth.

That's what the Navajo Nation Zoo Boo is about.

Navajo Nation Zoo Department Manager David Mikesic, stated, "We want to invite everyone to our annual ZOO BOO event, which was an event that we created especially for the youth. We created this event as our way to engage the youth and provide a safe place for them to enjoy Halloween, but more importantly to teach them about the cultural importance and significance of animals and various species that are native to the Navajo reservation."

The Seventh Annual Navajo Nation ZOO BOO event will be held at the Navajo Nation Zoo on Saturday, October 24th. The free event will include a costume contest and other Halloween activities for the youth. For more information contact the Navajo Nation Zoo at (928) 871-6574.



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

October 20, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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President Begaye and Vice President Nez deliver State of the Navajo Nation Address

WINDOW ROCK-Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez recapped accomplishments of their first five months in office when they delivered the State of the Navajo Nation Address at the start of the 2015 Navajo Nation Council Fall Session.

Both leaders thanked Speaker Lorenzo Bates and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council for allowing them the time to deliver the State of the Navajo Nation address.

"Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are five months into our administration and already we are making significant strides tribally, regionally and nationally," President Begaye said.

Three new cabinet members were introduced. They all will be coming before Council for final confirmation during this 2015 Fall Council Session.

Dr. Donald Benn has been selected for the position of Executive Director for the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Benn earned his doctoral degree in Chemistry from New Mexico State University. Previously, he worked as Director of the Native American Research Laboratory at the University of Montana in Missoula.

Mrs. Biddah Becker has been selected to serve in the capacity of Executive Director for the Division of Natural Resources. Mrs. Becker has served as the Assistant Attorney General for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice leading the Natural Resources Unit. Mrs. Becker earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of New Mexico School of Law.

Mrs. Terrelene G. Massey has been chosen to lead the Division of Social Services as their Executive Director. Mrs. Massey is from Pinon. She graduated from the University of New Mexico School of Law and is a licensed attorney in the State of New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. She earned her master's degree in Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin.

One significant milestone of the Begaye-Nez administration thus far has been the Gold King Mine spill, which occurred on August 5, 2015. At the hands of a USEPA contract worker, the spill expelled upwards of 3 million gallons of contaminated water into the Animas River which is a tributary of the San Juan River.

Hundreds of Navajo farmers and ranchers depend on the San Juan River for their crops and livestock. The spill had devastating impacts to the region.

Resulting from the USEPA's self-acknowledged responsibility in the Gold King Mine spill, Administrator Jared Blumenfeld visited the Navajo Nation last week to discuss remediation of the river. Discussion



President Russell Begaye (right) and Vice President Jonathan Nez presented the State of the Navajo Nation address yesterday at the start of the 2015 Navajo Nation Council Fall Session.

topics included a 5-year plan to address the cleanup of abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation, the Clean Air Act, and a preliminary long-range plan for the clean-up of the Gold King Mine spill.

A cooperative agreement is also in the process of being developed to reimburse the Navajo Nation for associated response costs.

"Relations between the USEPA and the Navajo Nation remain cordial and we are both very interested in reaching an agreement that benefits the Navajo Nation and our Navajo people," said President Begaye.

Vice President Nez said that one of the most pressing issues facing the Nation is youth suicide, which has reached epidemic proportions within the Navajo Nation.

"The number of suicides since August 2015 has increased to eight within the Navajo Nation," he said.

In response, the Navajo Nation Division of Health is working to build an interdisciplinary team to address this epidemic. The Vice President said he urged Sylvia Burwell, US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary, to bring the issue to the White House Council on Native American Affairs so that all necessary departments are involved in bringing an end to native youth suicide.

Navajo veterans remain a top priority as one of the four pillars of the administration. As such, all divisions under the Executive Branch have been directed to include Navajo veterans in their division strategy, whether for employment, training or other forms of assistance.

"Our Navajo veterans have served as protectors of the United



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

States and the Navajo Nation. It's our duty to honor their service," President Begaye said. "Our administration has met with members of Congress and the Senate to discuss veteran issues, which include housing, employment, health care and mental health counseling services for post-traumatic stress disorder."

President Begaye also discussed a recent visit to residents of the Former Bennett Freeze Area in which members of his cabinet addressed concerns of housing, infrastructure and roads. The area has been without development for nearly fifty years as a result of the Navajo-Hopi land dispute.

"A Promise Zone application highlighting this development project will be created and submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture for consideration for the one award designated for a tribe," he said. "A Promise Zone award will help increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment and

enhance public health."

Other highlights included: the Navajo Nation assuming control of three San Juan County fire stations along with associated assets; the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project in which Congress has passed technical amendments that will facilitate a process for the Nation and the Federal Government to deliver water from the project; and the Ramah Chapter winning a 25-year long legal dispute with the United States government which resulted in a \$58 million victory for the Navajo Nation.

In conclusion, President Begaye told the Council, "This is just a broad overview of the efforts we have worked diligently to put forth. In order for these goals and objectives to be achieved, we must commit to working together."

###



October 20, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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President Begaye Proclaims Third Week of October as Navajo Nation Disability Awareness Week

WINDOW ROCK—Today, President Russell Begaye signed a proclamation declaring the third week of October to be Navajo Nation Disability Awareness Week.

"Despite their contributions to our society, people with disabilities face discrimination and limited access," President Begaye declared in the proclamation. "This Administration will work to strengthen protections against disability-based discriminations. Our people should not fear discrimination in disclosing one's disability."

Supporters and advocates for disability awareness set out on a march this morning from the Navajo Shopping Center in Window Rock to the Navajo Nation Council Chambers.

Upon arrival at the Council Chambers, marchers were greeted by staff from the Office of the President and Vice President and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council.

The Navajo Nation has enacted laws to protect the disabled. The Vulnerable Adult Protection Act, passed two years ago, says that any Navajo with a disability should not be abused, neglected, abandoned or exploited.

The Vulnerable Adult Protection Act, also known as the Doris Act, is named after Doris Dennison who faced disability injustices after being injured in a car accident that left her wheelchair bound.

Losing her ability to walk opened her eyes to the challeng-



Today, President Russell Begaye signed a proclamation declaring the third week in October to be Navajo Nation Disability Awareness Week. President Begaye is pictured with Jamescita Peshlakai and Hoskie Benally.

es that disabled people face on a daily basis. As an advocate for disability rights, Dennison has served as the Board President of Assist to Independence.

"The work isn't done. Since I've been advocating for accessibility, the main issue I want to see is the reconsideration of the Navajo Nation Vocational Rehabilitation and Opportunities for the Handicapped Act," Dennison said.

The law, which was passed in 1984, requires that both public and private entities provide reasonable accommodations for the special needs of persons with a disability.

"Some of the things this act

addresses are the accessibility to buildings and employment," she said. "We want this act to be reconsidered and for the whole Navajo Nation to comply with it."

The number of disabled Navajos is significant said Hoskie Benally Jr., President of the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities.

The Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities is established under Title 13 within the Navajo Nation Code. "We are within the government to advocate for those with disabilities," Benally Jr., said.

The Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disabilities is estab-

lished to advocate for individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access to employment, education, housing, public safety, communications, recreation, medical treatment, and socialization opportunities.

"We are stronger as a Nation when we work together," President Begaye said. "We must work to remove obstacles so every Navajo and person has the opportunity to fully utilize their talents and skills in the workplace and communities."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCTOBER 22, 2015

PRESIDENT BEGAYE STATEMENT ON FEMA DENYING REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY
DECLARATION

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye issued the following statement today on the Federal Emergency Management Agency denying the Navajo Nation's request for an Emergency Declaration in response to the Gold King Mine spill:

"The Gold King Mine spill culturally and economically devastated the Navajo Nation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's decision to decline our request for an emergency declaration is disappointing and wrong. Our people have suffered due to the reckless actions of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the federal government's failed response to this crisis has only added insult to injury. The Obama Administration has turned down virtually every request we have made for greater assistance, each time referring us back to the EPA – the same agency that caused the problem in the first place.

"Its time for President Obama to take action to fix the disaster that was caused by his EPA. The President needs to respond to bipartisan calls to issue an emergency declaration and instruct all federal agencies to assist the Navajo Nation instead of sending our requests back to the EPA.

"The Navajo Nation will appeal FEMA's ill-advised decision and fight for every resource possible to address the damage caused by the Gold King Mine spill. As President, I will not rest until our people have been made whole and fairly compensated for their losses."

##



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OCTOBER 22, 2015

BEGAYE STATEMENT ON US DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR REPORT BLAMING EPA
FOR GOLD KING MINE SPILL

Window Rock – President Russell Begaye today released the following statement on the United States Department of Interior report on the Gold King Mine Spill. According to the *Associated Press*, which received an advanced copy of the report prior to its public release, the Interior Department found that “an EPA cleanup crew rushed its work and failed to consider the complex engineering involved” and triggered “the very blowout it hoped to avoid.” The Interior report directly refutes the EPA’s assertion that the blowout was “likely inevitable.”

“We applaud the Department of Interior for thoroughly investigating the Gold King Mine Spill and refuting the Environmental Protection Agency’s flawed contention that the blowout was inevitable. This report exposes the EPA’s gross negligence that triggered a disaster that has culturally and economically devastated the Navajo Nation.

“The Department of the Interior’s report calls into question the competency of the EPA and demonstrates why this embattled bureaucracy is the wrong federal agency to manage the response to the crisis it created. It’s time for President Obama to respond to bipartisan calls to issue an emergency declaration and instruct all federal agencies to assist the Navajo Nation instead of sending our requests back to the EPA.”

##



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
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OCTOBER 22, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WE ARE NATIONS, LET'S ACT LIKE IT, PRESIDENT RUSSELL BEGAYE SAYS AT NCAI



During his speech at the 72nd NCAI convention in San Diego, President Russell Begaye called for federal recognition of Native American sovereignty, representation within the Presidential Cabinet and solidarity between tribes to move issues forward.

SAN DIEGO- Before the 72nd Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye delivered a speech reinforcing the inherent sovereignty of Native American nations.

"When it comes to minorities in this country, national leaders need to know that we are not just another minority group. We are Native nations. We have been established as nations. Treat us as nations," President Begaye said to the gathered tribal leaders.

President Begaye said it's both critical and urgent that the Feder-

al Government affords water and mineral rights to tribes rather than opposing them.

"The Federal Government believes we are not capable of overseeing our coal and our minerals. We need full rights," he said. "The government knows that water belongs to Indian nations; it's our ancestral right. The Winters Doctrine establishes this."

President Begaye reinforced the jurisdiction of tribal law on tribal lands without exception to a criminal's ethnicity or nationality.

"When crimes are committed on Indian land, our jurisdiction allows us to impose our Indian laws," he said. "If you commit a

crime on tribal land, you should go to a tribal jail."

He also called for President Obama to appoint a Native American leader to sit on the White House Council on Native American Affairs.

"How many Native American leaders sit on that council?" he asked. "Zero. Yet these are our futures they determine. We are capable of standing up for ourselves."

Although the Navajo Nation is not a member of NCAI, the Congress extended an invitation for President Begaye to speak at the convention. President Begaye supported NCAI's purpose and

advocacy on behalf of Native American rights and issues that affect tribal sovereignty.

President Begaye's speech was met with resounding applause at several points and upon conclusion it warranted a standing ovation.

"Indian people need to work together. We need to stand by our culture and our prayers for the purposes of our precious resources and land," he said. "We need our voices to be heard at the White House level. Let's not work against each other, we need to work together."



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2015

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Council approves supplemental funding for special education program

WINDOW ROCK – On Wednesday during the Fall Council Session, members voted unanimously to approve Legislation No. 0201-15, which would allocate approximately \$2.4 million to the St. Michaels Association for Special Education, Inc., if signed into law by President Russell Begaye.

For over 40 years, the SMASE, Inc. program has been a non-profit organization that provides educational, residential, medical, and therapeutic services to Navajo children and adults with mental and physical developmental disabilities.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that the supplemental funding would go towards restoration of their transportation services, educational programs, renovation of dilapidated buildings that do not meet code standards, reinstate staff back to full-time, continue the transitional program for adult disabled clients, and other services related to caring for special needs individuals.

“This entity has never been here [to ask for help], as long as I’ve been on Council. This opportunity came up and [SMASE, Inc.] approached me and asked for help,” said Delegate Hale. “These individuals are precious and we need to meet their needs in the best way possible.”

According to the legislation, the SMASE, Inc. receives funding from the Bureau of Indian Education, Arizona Public Schools, Arizona State DDD, Navajo Nation Division of Family Services, Navajo Nation Growing in Beauty, and public donations.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í) said the legislation to aid the children and adults with disabilities should have been prioritized and put at the top of the list for supplemental funding.

“These are our children and our stories are imbedded with them. They are the special children of the Holy Ones and we have an obligation to take care of them,” said Delegate Crotty.

The program also provides day treatment services for adults and an education program for children, as well as 14 group homes on and off campus. Caregivers are responsible for management of their clients’ health care, education, development of independent and social skills, and community involvement.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) suggested that Council members prioritize additional funding for persons with disabilities in next year's budget.

"We should have a clause in the budget to take care of our disabled people and elderly. We need to take care of their warmth and their homes. They should not have to wait to be given funding for their needs. They need sincere help," said Delegate Tsosie.

Council members voted 21-0 to pass Legislation No. 0201-15. President Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the bill once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 22, 2015

Navajo Parks and Recreation Promoting Health and Fitness

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – A haven of unparalleled beauty.

Words that describe the land of the Navajo people.

For as long as most people can remember, Navajoland has been a mecca for tourists and the film industry. Awe-inspiring scenery, towering rock formations and yawning canyon walls....this is what attracts millions of tourists from throughout the world.

“We are very pleased that visitors are captivated by our magnificent scenery, but the true beauty of the Navajo Nation is our people,” stated Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye. “Our mission is to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations. We are doing this for the benefit of the Navajo people and for the guests who visit our land.”

Tourism studies have revealed that the primary reason tourists travel to Navajoland is to see the scenery. Additionally, more than half of the people who visit the Navajo Nation return for a second visit.

In fact, visitation at all of the tribal parks increased tremendously during the summer of 2015. Begaye attributes this to increased marketing efforts throughout the years.



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“Because of the vastness of our land, many tourists are not able to stop at all of our tribal parks on their first visit. Many tourists often return to see the rest of our parks,” Begaye explained. “We are grateful that our guests enjoy their vacation to the Navajo Nation and come back. However, we want them to know that we have more to offer than scenery. We have many Navajo cultural events, a myriad of outdoor recreation and year-round events and activities that they can experience.”

With a trend to live healthier lifestyles, Begaye said the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department created a series of year-round running events that will be held at its tribal parks. The first event was held in Window Rock in September.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, said “Navajo Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are both strong supporters of living healthy. Not only is running a great way to exercise your body, but it is also an excellent way to exercise your mind and spirit. We hope this partnership between the Navajo Nation and NavajoYes will mark the beginning of coveted events that you will want to experience. I commend all of the entities who are working together to make these events enjoyable and successful, but most importantly, as a venue to keep us strong and healthy. We need healthy minds and bodies who can lead the Navajo Nation into the next generation.”

Echoing President Begaye, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, stated, “As an avid runner, I am extremely excited about these upcoming running events on the Navajo Nation. I enjoy running with my people and guests who visit our reservation. It’s good to hear stories from the people when I run with them. They have stories of overcoming health issues or struggles. It’s empowering. People say I’m encouraging, but I find them encouraging.”

Begaye added, “The Navajo Nation is the ideal place to get fit while enjoying our beautiful land. Nowhere else in the world will you be able to cross four states in one marathon or run near beautiful rock formations that echo the rich history of the Navajo people. Running has always been part of our Navajo tradition. We are therefore, opening our doorway so to speak to



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people who want to experience the embracing culture of the Navajo people. We are partnering with various entities to promote healthy living. We invite everyone to experience what we have to offer.”

Begaye said the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department is collaborating with NavajoYes, which is a non-profit organization that promotes community wellness, lifelong fitness and youth empowerment on the Navajo reservation and the Navajo Nation Division of Health.

NavajoYes CEO Tom Riggenschach stated, “NavajoYes has been an advocate for community wellness and lifelong fitness on the Navajo Nation for over 20 years. We are very excited by the opportunity to work with Navajo Parks and Recreation, the Navajo Division of Health and the Office of the President and Vice President to promote these common goals through the Navajo Parks Race Series.”

The Navajo Parks Race Series includes two remaining races in 2015, which are Asaayi Mountain Run on November 14th and Monument Valley Marathon at Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park on December 12th. The races in 2016 include Little Colorado River Gorge on February 13th; Shiprock Marathon on May 6-7th; Asaayi Mountain Run on August 13th; Navajo Code Talker 29K on September 11th; Four Corners Marathon on October 7-10; Rainbow Bridge Trail Ultra on November 19th and Monument Valley Marathon on December 10th.

For information about Navajo Parks Race Series registration or entry fees, contact Tom Riggenschach at (928) 429-0345 or chuskaman@yahoo.com

Visitors can also contact the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647 for information about Navajo cultural events and other events and activities or via their website at www.navajonationparks.org



OCTOBER 23, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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32 Cars derailed on BNSF Railway east of Gallup

GALLUP-On Friday, Oct. 23, at approximately 7 a.m., BNSF Railway reported that 32 cars had derailed east of Gallup, N.M. at the Southfork Bridge that crosses north to Red Rock State Park.

State Road 118, also known as Old Route 66, was shut down between Mile Marker 26 and Mile Marker 32 while hazmat crews were on scene to assess a spill from one of the train cars. Hazmat determined the spill was liquid asphalt and was non-hazardous. BNSF Railway is responsible for clean-up of the spill.

According to Sergeant Chad Pierce, Public Information Officer with the New Mexico State Police, State Road 118 is open.

Residents and southbound commuters from Pinedale or Church Rock have also been advised to use Superman Canyon Road or Becenti Trail if necessary.

President Begaye recently met with Carl R. Ice, President and CEO of BNSF Railway based in Ft. Worth, TX. CEO Ice assured



It was reported that 32 cars had derailed along the BNSF Railway east of Gallup on the morning of Friday, Oct. 23. (Photo: Ernesto Salazar)

President Begaye that safety is BNSF's first priority. CEO Ice mentioned that a Navajo group of BNSF workers in Grants, N.M. had recently been recognized for their safety standards.

"This derailment is certainly un-

fortunate. However, we trust that the New Mexico Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be diligent in making sure that anything spilled is not hazardous to the environment or to people. EPA must be forthright in this situ-

ation as many of our Navajo people live along the railway," President Begaye said.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OPVP Supports FCPP in Providing Employment Opportunities for Navajo Veterans

Sundt, an Arizona construction company, is looking to hire approximately 500 contract workers over the course of the next three years starting in October 2015.

The Four Corners Power Plant will be installing new environmental equipment onto their two larger units and the contract workers will be utilized in the installation of this equipment over the next three-year timeframe.

Sundt is looking to identify Navajo veterans who would be interested in working on this retrofit project. Jamescita Peshlakai, Veterans Liaison for the Navajo Office of the President and Vice-President will be working with Sundt to facilitate the employment of Navajo veterans for the project.

A Job Fair will be held November 18th at the Navajo Nation Museum. Details on this job fair will be provided to the media and will be discussed in a two-hour radio forum scheduled to be broadcast on KTNN, Radio 660, on November 10th.

Those entities and organizations partnering in this initiative include; Sundt, Four Corners Power Plant, NM Workforce Development, Job Corps, San Juan College, Navajo Veterans

Department, Navajo Workforce Development, Navajo Office of Labor Relations, and the Navajo Office of the President and Vice-President, Veterans Liaison.

President Russell Begaye reinforced the fact that both veterans and job creation are critical pillars of the Begaye-Nez administration.

He encourages hard working veterans that are seeking employment to secure one of these positions.

"I commend Ms. Peshlakai, who is a veteran herself, for her strong advocacy on behalf of both veterans and employment opportunities. This opportunity is significant as it will provide for veterans to pay their bills and support their families," he said.

President Begaye extends his gratitude to the companies involved for being proactive in seeking to hire Navajo veterans.

For more information, the project and employment opportunity contacts are Jamescita Peshlakai jpeshlakai@navajo-nsn.gov NNOPVP or Mike Yeager mayeager@sundt.com, Sundt or Terry Dayish, APS-FCPP Terry.Dayish@aps.com.



OCTOBER 23, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Highway 118 remains closed for clean-up from derailment

GALLUP-Updated information indicates that Highway 118 was closed today at 1 p.m. Traffic is being diverted around Rehoboth on Hogback road, coming out on Route 7048 near Fire Rock Casino. Highway 118 is expected to remain closed until tomorrow as BNSF crews work through the night.

For the community members who reside in South Fork, Padre Canyon and White Cliffs, roads have been bladed by McKinley County. Church Rock Chapter is also attending to roads between Padre Canyon to White Cliffs with their backhoe.

Residents of Church Rock area can also take I-40 East to Exit 33, the Ft. Wingate exit, and get on State Road 118, I-40 frontage road, and go east back to the South Fork Bridge.

On Friday, Oct. 23, at approximately 7 a.m., BNSF Railway reported that upward of 25 cars had derailed east of Gallup, N.M. at the Southfork Bridge that crosses north to Red Rock State Park.

State Road 118, also known as Old Route 66, was shut down between Mile Marker 26 and Mile



It was reported that upward of 25 cars had derailed along the BNSF Railway east of Gallup on the morning of Friday, Oct. 23. (Photo: Ernesto Salazar)

Marker 32 while hazmat crews were on scene to assess a spill from one of the train cars. Hazmat determined the spill was liquid asphalt and was non-hazardous. BNSF Railway is responsible for clean-up of the spill.

President Begaye recently met with Carl R. Ice, President and CEO of BNSF Railway based in

Ft. Worth, TX. CEO Ice assured President Begaye that safety is BNSF's first priority. CEO Ice mentioned that a Navajo group of BNSF worker in Grants, N.M. had recently been recognized for their safety standards.

"This derailment is certainly unfortunate. However, we trust that the New Mexico Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) will be diligent in making sure that anything spilled is not hazardous to the environment or to people. EPA must be forthright in this situation as many of our Navajo people live along the railway," President Begaye said.

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OCTOBER 27, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHINLE BANK ROBBER IN CUSTODY

CHINLE-The suspect who robbed the Chinle Wells Fargo yesterday morning was taken into Federal custody at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 26. Police also recovered the vehicle that was used in the robbery.

On Monday, Oct. 26 at approximately 10:51 a.m., Chinle Police Department (PD) received a call from a Wells Fargo employee stating that the bank had just been robbed. Chinle PD responded. Officer Carlton Jim and Lt. Dempsey Harvey were first on the scene.

Information from the crime scene indicated that a bank robber had gotten away with over \$1800 dollars. A description of the vehicle involved was given as a red Ford Explorer with New Mexico state license plates. The vehicle fled southbound on Route 191.

Chinle PD alerted both Window Rock PD and Dilkon PD.

At 2:08 p.m., Chinle PD received a call that identified the vehicle at a residence ¼ mile southeast of Chinle Holiday Inn. Police responded along with Arizona Department of Public Safety.

Chinle PD checked the vehicle tags and found the vehicle was identified as being stolen from Albuquerque N.M. Police then cleared the residence and did not find the suspect. Chinle PD called for Strategic Reaction Team (SRT) and K-9 assistance from Window Rock PD.

Police tracked shoe prints east toward the Chinle wash. The suspect was tracked to another residence near the Presbyterian Church.

There, contact was made with an individual who said he gave the suspect a ride to Chevron.

The individual said the suspect told him he was trying to get to Window Rock or Gallup and that he would pay for gas to get there. The individual dropped him off at Chevron.

Police dispersed to Chevron to view the security camera footage and were able to ascertain that the suspect had changed his clothes there.

At approximately 6:07 p.m., Officer Carlton Jim said he had detained an individual at Chevron. This individual said he had picked up the suspect and dropped him off at a residence six miles north of Chinle.

Police responded to the residence where they were told the suspect had fled on foot a half-hour earlier. Police units patrolled the area near the residence.

At 7:04 p.m., Lt. Harvey called for units to meet him at the residence six miles north of Chinle. It was there they apprehended the suspect and took him into custody.

The suspect is currently being detained at the Chinle Detention Center and will be transported to Flagstaff by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

"I commend our Navajo Nation Police Department for their professional response to the robbery," said President Russell Begaye. "I'd also like to thank the Navajo public for assisting our police force in apprehending the criminal."



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 28, 2015

NBC Today Returning to Navajo Nation - Seeking to Break World Record

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – NBC Today Show will return to the Navajo Nation in an attempt to break a world record.

And the Navajo Nation hopes that millions of television viewers from throughout the U.S. will capture a glimpse of Navajo culture when NBC Today Show makes its second debut to Navajoland.

NBC Weatherman Al Roker of NBC Television will broadcast his live weather forecast from Four Corners Monument from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. local time on Monday, November 9th.

“We are very excited to return to the Navajo Nation,” said NBC Producer Karen Trosset. “Four Corners Monument was selected because Al Roker needs to do the weather in 50 states and Four Corners Monument allows him to do the weather in four states in the same spot.”

The segment is called Rokerthon is Back, which is one man, 50 states in one week.

Trosset continued, “Al Roker will attempt a Guinness World Record by attempting to report a weather forecast in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in record time.”

The Navajo Nation received world-wide publicity during an event called the Nick Wallenda Skywalk at Little Colorado River Gorge several years ago – NBC aired various stories about the Navajo Nation prior to the event. This will mark the second time NBC will produce a live broadcast on the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye, stated, “We are working diligently behind the scenes to ensure that we provide a safe place for the NBC television production crew while they are here on the Navajo Nation. We are also very grateful that NBC selected Four Corners Monument as a place to televise Mr. Roker’s weather forecast. Four Corners Monument is the only place in the country where visitors can stand in four states simultaneously. We look forward to sharing the Navajo culture with the world.”



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Due to limited space, the public is encouraged to arrive early. For more information, contact Four Corners Monument at (928) 206-2450 or the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647.

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OCTOBER 28, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**TWO BOYS WHO WENT MISSING OVERNIGHT HAVE BEEN FOUND IN
BESHBITO AREA**

BESHBITO-Two Navajo boys who went missing yesterday while hauling wood with their grandparents and aunt were found at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 28.

The two boys, 3 and 4 years old, wandered off into the woods yesterday at approximately 2 p.m. The incident wasn't reported to the Navajo Nation Police Department (PD) until approximately 7 p.m.

A search party was organized in the area 15 miles north of State Route 264 in Beshbito Valley, Ariz. A search party worked throughout the night without finding the two boys. The search party was cut off at 5:30 a.m. this morning for the purpose of regrouping.

At 10 a.m. the search party found the boys three miles south of where they were originally went missing. The boys are reported to have been uninjured and in good health.

Navajo County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue and Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife were enroute, but cancelled as the boys were located.

The search was a joint effort of NNPD, Navajo Nation Fire Department, Apache County Sheriff's Department, Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management, Arizona Department of Public Safety, and the Hopi Emergency Response Team. All participated in the search and the investigation of the missing boys.

"I would like to thank the NNPD for their timely and organized response to this incident. They are consistently working on behalf of our people's safety," said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. "It's also important to recognize the community and volunteer efforts of those who organized and participated in the search party. Thank you for your efforts."

"During this season of pinon picking and wood hauling, it's important that we keep an eye on each other. As a Navajo community, it's our duty to look out for each other's safety," said Vice President Jonathan Nez. "With the onset of the winter months, let's prepare ourselves and check on our elders as well."

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OCTOBER 31, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND REVENUE SHARING HAVE CRITICAL IMPACTS TO GAMING TRIBES, PRESIDENT BEGAYE SAID AT 2015 AIGA EXPO

SCOTTSDALE-On Friday, Oct. 30, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye spoke at AIGA's Tribal Leadership Forum during a panel on 'Exploring the Many Facets of Gaming'.

President Begaye was joined by White Mountain Apache Chairman Ronnie Lupe, Hualapai Chairwoman Sherry Counts and Pueblo of Sandia Lt. Governor Stuart Paisano.

The 2015 AIGA Expo was held at Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community's Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale.

A relative newcomer to gaming, the Navajo Nation has constructed four casinos in five years. These casinos have created 1500 jobs and in the process contributed to utility investments in the areas near development.

Thus far, Navajo gaming has paid a total of \$122,550,000 million dollars in employee salaries and benefits. Eighty-five percent of Navajo gaming employees are Navajo tribal members.

"It's good for our Navajo people to get a paycheck, go shopping and buy cars. It gives them a tremendous sense of pride that they can raise their families," President Begaye said.

Since its inception, Indian gaming has generated over a billion dollars in the state of Arizona said President Begaye. By impacting the state economy in this manner, President Begaye said tribes are



"We have contributed to raising the salary of teachers and impacted many other state programs," President Begaye said during the Tribal Leadership Forum at the 2015 AIGA Expo.

also impacting their own nations. Revenue sharing has greatly benefited educational programs across the state.

"We have contributed to raising the salary of teachers and impacted many other state programs," President Begaye said. "Every teacher in Arizona needs to be thankful for Indian gaming."

President Begaye said he would like to see gaming impact tribal communities on a greater level via revenue sharing with the state.

"The state needs to take the money we send to them and put half of it back into the programs of tribal nations."

Tribal leaders on the panel discussed threats that are impacting Indian gaming. Lt. Governor Stuart Paisano said in New Mexico the largest threat to Indian gaming is the expansion of the lottery and

racinos.

"Racinos are beginning to utilize growing technology in gaming to put newer machines into their facilities," he said. "We are seeing the exclusivity of gaming slipping away. Gaming tribes are looking to enhance protection and communication is key to working together."

Chief Executive Officer for Navajo Gaming, Derek Watchman addressed alternative markets that have impacted Navajo's Twin Arrows Casino.

"It's interesting that for Twin Arrows, our primary competition is Laughlin," CEO Watchman said. "In the Valley, the alternative is Las Vegas but up in Flagstaff, people will go to Laughlin."

Watchman said the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise is consistently assessing their own competitive status.

"The encroachment of outside gaming will always be there because gaming creates revenue. As such, we are always thinking outside of the box in moving Navajo gaming forward."

As tribal nations look forward to the future of Indian gaming, they must also consider the obstacles of renegotiating gaming compacts with the state and the encroachment of non-Indian gaming.

Tribes need to channel gaming revenue back into education programs to affect the next generation of leaders in becoming more market savvy and globally effective said President Begaye.

"The next generation needs to know the struggles we have gone through to create and protect Indian gaming in the state," he said. "We must defend Indian gaming and to do this we need to have a strong strategy in place to counter commercial and non-Indian gaming."

Tribes need to exercise their inherent sovereignty, President Begaye told the panel.

"Our sovereignty defines us. It is our strength and it gives us a platform to negotiate with the state and the federal government. We were here way before the United States was formed. We had our own government and way of life. As tribal nations, we need to stand together and move forward."

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