



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Vice President Ben Shelly declares state of emergency for Navajo Mountain following waterline break, water shortage

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN, Utah – After visiting the Navajo Nation's most remote community here Sunday, Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly and the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management today declared a state of emergency in order for the Navajo Mountain Chapter to address its water emergency following a Dec. 19 waterline break.

“The Navajo Mountain Chapter needs access to safe drinking water for its residents and livestock,” Vice President Shelly said. “Resources must be combined to help address the immediate need for safe drinking water.”

On Sunday, Vice President Shelly and Jimson Joe, manager of the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management Program, met with San Juan County Administrator Rick Bailey and Arizona Department of Transportation workers at Navajo Mountain to assist with coordination efforts.

“Mr. Bailey and the San Juan County Commission are the real heroes of this emergency incident,” Vice President Shelly said. “On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, he and Martin Wilson of the Utah Division of Homeland Security spent the whole day at Navajo Mountain assessing the situation and determining the needs. The Navajo Nation owes him a tremendous debt of gratitude.”

On Christmas Day, San Juan County, Utah, declared a state of emergency after a waterline from Beaver Springs broke and access to safe drinking water in Navajo Mountain area was threatened on Dec. 19.



Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly confers with San Juan County Administrator Rick Bailey and Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management manager Jimson Joe at Navajo Mountain on Sunday.

Since then, the county and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority coordinated efforts to haul water to a water tank at Navajo Mountain that pumps water to Navajo Mountain's high school, chapter house, Indian Health Service health facility, and local housing for the community of 1,000 people.

On Saturday, seven loads of water of 5,000 gallons each were delivered to the Navajo Mountain water system followed by another six loads on Sunday.

Earlier efforts to haul water last week were prevented by impassable road conditions. However, San Juan County, ADOT, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs improved road conditions for the water hauling trucks and area residents on Saturday.

Mr. Bailey reported that the Bureau of Reclamation has identified \$100,000 of drought funds that can be used to reimburse the cost of the water hauling.

Although not responsible for the road, the Arizona Department of Transportation has kept up with plowing BIA Route N-16 to keep it open.

“Water hauling is critical,” Vice President Shelly said. “I commend Mr. Bailey, San Juan County Commissioner and Navajo Nation Council Delegate Ken Maryboy, the Navajo Emergency Management Commission, Division of Public Safety Director Samson Cowboy, ADOT, and NTUA for coordinating these water hauling efforts,” Vice President Shelly said. “Through a Navajo Nation

emergency declaration, we can better address the situation by coordinating efforts and combining resources among tribal, state, and county governmental entities.”

To make repairs to Navajo Mountain’s water pipeline, efforts must be completed to make the waterline access road passable for heavy repair equipment.

Utah Congressman Jim Matheson’s office said the congressman has also pledged to do whatever he can to help.

Michael Benson, program specialist for the Navajo Nation Water Management Branch, said once the new waterline from Inscription House to Navajo Mountain is completed in about two years, these kinds of emergencies will be prevented.

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