



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
February 12, 2014

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## **Resources and Development Committee approves report regarding Solid Waste Management on Navajo Nation**

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee approved a report regarding the Solid Waste Management Program on the Navajo Nation.

The SWMP was established under the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development to ensure that solid waste management is disposed of in a safe manner and that recycling options are available throughout the Nation, to provide a healthier environment.

Speaking on behalf of SWMP, Deputy Director of DCD said the primary purpose of the program is to develop a self-sustaining solid waste disposal system for the Nation’s 110 chapters. Yazzie stated that educating the chapters on how to handle their solid waste management has been a challenge.

“We’ve learned through the years that solid waste management is not a priority for chapters. Trash does not seem like a big issue at the chapter level,” stated Yazzie.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) expressed concern over the current status of projects involving the SWMP, adding that residents are illegally dumping ashes from their coal stoves due to a lack of dispensaries.

“I don’t know what this department does. It cannot even provide the simple job of providing at least one landfill in the Navajo Nation. Where is our solid waste program? Why can’t this program encourage the need for landfills within our community? It is our own department and structure that prohibits us from achieving these goals,” stated Delegate Tsosie.

Delegate Tsosie also pointed out that a large amount of money is spent off the Navajo Nation because people are forced to transfer their solid waste to the Gallup Solid Waste Division, located in Gallup, for a fee.

“We need a study to be conducted and a feasible place to analyze a system of landfills. These border towns are getting rich off us and our trash. We need a plan. How do we do it so that the chapters can make a business out of solid waste management?” asked RDC chair Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta).

Delegate Tsosie recommended that the Navajo Nation emulate Gallup’s Recycling Center because they have an effective recycling center in place that recycles metal, newspapers, plastic, electronic waste and small appliances.

“We need some type of recycling center like this. We need to find a way to regionalize this service. Maybe have four chapters per transfer station. Once we set that into place, Navajo Nation can buy trucks that can haul trash away. We need to utilize Navajo dollars because we are spending a lot of money hauling trash to landfills outside the reservation,” stated Delegate Tsosie.

Yazzie noted that the SWMP is providing training and educational seminars to local communities about the development of transfer stations to regulate the Navajo Nation’s solid waste.

“The program promotes and provides chapter officials with workshops on developmental waste management plans pertaining to this issue. This is a continuous effort on part of the SWMP,” stated Yazzie.

Yazzie said that a recent effort to develop a landfill in the community of Rough Rock was unsuccessful due to land issues, adding that it would be a costly setup due to the operations and maintenance associated with operating a solid waste facility, which is estimated to be \$400,000.

“So, what is the plan for the Nation as far as SWMP is concerned? We have been asking for this plan, last year, and the year before. We need landfills and transfer stations. If it is in the best interest of the Navajo people, we will go with it,” stated Delegate Benally.

A request for a follow-up meeting between RDC and SWMP is scheduled to take place on April 1.

RDC members approved the report with a vote of 5-0.

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