



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Navajo Indian Irrigation Project Negotiation Subcommittee prepares to explore new opportunities**

**FARMINGTON, N.M.** – On Friday, the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project Negotiation Subcommittee received several updates including the accomplishments of the subcommittee, priority listing updates, status of the WIIN Act application, requesting the Bureau of Indian Affairs reimbursement for operation and maintenance shortfalls, Navajo Agricultural Products Industry's master lease, the Farm Bill and Omnibus Bill, and others. The meeting also included a discussion on Navajo Nation's position of hemp production.

During his report, NIIP Subcommittee chair Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) expressed his appreciation to the committee members for their hard work and dedication in addressing the concerns and strategies that impacted NAPI since the subcommittee was established in April 2017.

"The responsibilities of the subcommittee is very challenging, however, the main focus continues to reflect our priorities. As the term of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Council is coming to an end, I highly encourage and hope the new administration will continue to move forward with the responsibilities," said Speaker Bates.

Additionally, he reviewed the subcommittee's accomplishments including the strengthened collaborations with the U.S. Department of the Interior, congressional leaders, the Western Congressional Caucus Foundation, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and the Office of Management and Budget regarding the growth and development of NAPI.

"The foundation has been set in place for the new administration. Also, the new subcommittee of the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council would also have the capacity to seek new opportunities for NAPI, such as industrial hemp production. NAPI has expressed interest in supporting the Farm Bill, which would also legalize industrial hemp. NAPI sees hemp production as a new and sustainable source of revenue," added Speaker Bates.

NIIP Subcommittee member Council Delegate Benjamin L. Bennett (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) stated that the progression towards industrial hemp production for NAPI would provide many economic benefits to the Navajo Nation.

“Industrial hemp production has become an enormous business across the country and the Nation needs to consider this huge investment. Realistically, the Nation is possibly facing a huge revenue loss due to the circumstances of Navajo Generating Station and Kayenta Mine. We need to look towards different economic opportunities that would help sustain the Nation,” said Delegate Bennett.

At the end of the meeting, Speaker Bates recommended NAPI to research the legal and practical considerations to determine which positions to take regarding industrial hemp production.

Incoming members of the 24<sup>th</sup> Navajo Nation Council are scheduled to be sworn-in during an inaugural ceremony on Jan. 15. Details of the event are forthcoming.

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