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## President Shelly visits Navajo AML Reclamation Site



Gilbert Dayzie (left), AML/UMTRA engineer, pointed to areas of mine reclamation and waste containment, as President Ben Shelly (right) toured an area near Red Mesa, Ariz Wednesday, June 6.

**RED MESA, Ariz.** - Navajo President Ben Shelly toured reclaimed uranium mine sites, as the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) advocates to keep funding from the federal government in tact.

“We need to find out exactly why the federal government wants to cut funding for AML,” President Shelly said during a tour of a mine waste containment site and reclaimed mines Wednesday, June 6.

Madeline Roanhorse, AML department manager, said at the federal level, AML funding is mainly related to coal mine reclamation.

Roanhorse and Melvin H. Yazzie, senior reclamation specialist, provided President Shelly a brief presentation discussing the accomplishments of AML and the ongoing progress the department has achieved in reclaiming Navajo lands.

Roanhorse said an ongoing funding issue is President Barack Obama’s administration and Federal Office of Management and Budgets plan to eliminate payments to certified American Indian Tribes and States AML programs as part of his proposed fiscal year 2013 budget. The potential funding cut would directly affect the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Crow Nation and certified states.

Under the 2006 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act amendments, certified Indian Tribes like the Navajo Nation are mandated to continue receiving payments

from fees collected from current and past coal production on the Navajo Nation. However, the Obama's budget plan ignores this important stipulation, Roanhorse said.

Other highlights of the briefing included the federal government's lack of recognition of the uranium legacy on the Navajo Nation and associated problems; misconception by the federal government that Navajo AML funding is no longer needed; the need for long-term monitoring and maintenance of AML sites; the large effort by the Navajo AML/UMTRA Department put into reclaiming AML sites throughout the Navajo Nation; funding community/infrastructure projects; and the Public Relations efforts being done by Navajo AML/UMTRA Department.

The visit concluded with a site tour of the AML sites in the Tse Tah AML area, near Red Mesa, Ariz. where President Shelly viewed reclaimed mines and the difficult terrain of some abandoned mines.

"Our AML and UMTRA offices still have more work and we need to see why the federal government is trying to cut their funding," President Shelly said.

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