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CONTACT: Rick Abasta, Press Officer  
Office of the President and Vice President  
THE NAVAJO NATION  
Phone: 928-871-7925  
Fax: 928-871-4025  
Email: rickyabasta@navajo-nsn.gov

## President Begaye announces \$6.7 million settlement for mitigation projects



*Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye announced a \$6.7 million settlement for Navajo Nation environmental mitigation projects near Shiprock, N.M. President Begaye met with Arizona Public Service in Window Rock recently to discuss the Four Corners Power Plant. (Photo by Rick Abasta)*

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Earlier today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Justice announced a federal Clean Air Act settlement regarding the Four Corners Power Plant.

The agreement requires an estimated \$160 million upgrade to the power plant's sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide pollution controls. A portion of the settlement funds, \$6.7 million, will be utilized for three health and environmental mitigation projects for the Navajo Nation, near Shiprock, N.M.

Arizona Public Service Co., primary owner of FCPP, along with former and current co-owners, El Paso Electric Co., Public Service Company of New Mexico, Salt River Project, Tucson Electric Power Co. and Southern California Edison Co. funded the settlement.

The settlement agreement

is the result of past power plant violations, including lack of prevention for significant deterioration requirements and new source review standards under the CAA.

“We appreciate that the health of the Navajo people was considered,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. “While \$6.7 million will provide many needed improvements for the Navajo people affected by the power plant emissions, we still have much more that needs to be addressed.

“We applaud the tenacity and dedication of the grassroots organizations that remained united throughout this process and never gave up, for the health and wellbeing of their people,” he added.

By continuing to work together, the Navajo Nation and federal government will address the numerous health concerns associated with air quality and need for pollution control

technology.

In June 2011, Earthjustice, a non-profit environmental law organization, filed a complaint on behalf of Dine' Citizens Against Ruining the Environment, To' Nizhoni Ani, Sierra Club and the National Parks Conservation Association.

The complaint alleged that FCPP did not properly obtain permits for major modifications made to the power plant from 1985 to 1986.

When Earthjustice filed the complaint, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency expressed concerns to the federal agencies that any monetary penalties assessed to the power plant by the U.S. would exclude any benefits to the tribe.

Navajo EPA recommended a number of mitigation projects to the U.S. EPA.

The projects included a coal burning stove replacement program, home weatherization,

installation of solar panels at tribal buildings, funding an allergist position at Northern Navajo Medical Center, funding tribal programs for asthma screening, and subsidizing a study to investigate health risks from exposure to biomass combustion in homes.

The \$6.7 million settlement agreement will fund three tribal mitigation projects for the stove replacement program, home weatherization and a health trust fund for medical treatment.

The medical treatment will include physician visits, equipment and medication for people affected with upper respiratory disease.

The mitigation projects recommended were based upon the potential to directly and measurably improve public health and local employment.