



## THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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# Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., welcomes new BIA director, announces Navajo gaming board members in State of Nation

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today welcomed new Bureau of Indian Affairs Director Carl J. Artman to the Navajo Nation, praised the uranium clean-up work of the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency and announced his appointments to the new Navajo Gaming Board of Directors.

In his summer State of the Navajo Nation address, the President also urged the Navajo Nation Council to continue its support for the San Juan River Water Settlement, which has been introduced into Congress as the Northwestern New Mexico Rural Water Projects Act, Senate Bill 1171. The Council approved the Settlement in December 2004.

“As you know very well, hundreds of the 80,000 Navajo men, women, and children who live within the project service area are hauling water in the backs of their pickup trucks for drinking, cooking, washing and livestock,” the President said. “Although construction of the project will not eliminate all water hauling on our land, this project will deliver water to tens of thousands of people who don’t have it now.”

The centerpiece of the bill is the authorization of the nearly \$1 billion construction of the Northwest New Mexico Rural Water Project, commonly known as the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, he said. The project will provide a reliable, sustainable supply of municipal water for the Navajo Nation, the City of Gallup, and the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

Prior to delivering his address, the President met with Mr. Artman for 30 minutes in his office. He told him the Navajo Nation has approximately \$600 million in unmet needs, and that if the federal government cannot fulfill its responsibility to meet these needs to provide the Navajo Nation with an interest-free loan for it to meet the needs itself.



*Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., welcomed new Bureau of Indian Affairs Director Carl J. Artman to the Navajo Nation and to his office. This was Director Artman's first official visit to the Navajo Nation. With him is Navajo Area Director Omar Bradley.*

Later, Mr. Artman is scheduled to visit the Chinle Boarding School in Many Farms, and the Chinle Detention Center.

The President reported that the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency persuaded the federal EPA to clean up the abandoned Northeast Church Rock Uranium Mine Site by showing that the site is on Navajo land. He said the U.S. EPA now is working with the Navajo EPA to clean up contaminated soil around five Navajo residences in close proximity to the mine site, which was formerly operated by the United Nuclear Corporation.

The phase one, \$2.1 million project has begun, and the U.S. EPA has removed 5,300 cubic feet of soil around the homes. The entire 125-acre site consists of two underground uranium mines, several vent holes, buried waste, unlined surface impoundments, sand fill areas, and a pile of waste uranium mined material.

"For 24 years, contaminated water has been discharged into the arroyo that runs past several homes," the President said. "Contaminated materials, spread by wind and run-off after snow and rain, have exposed many Navajo families and community members to radioactive substances."

He said that the former "Rare Metals" uranium mill processing plant in Tuba City is also slated to be cleaned up further. In 1962, Rare Metals merged with El Paso Natural Gas Co. which operated the mill until 1968. Part of the site was reclaimed under the Uranium Mill Tailing Radiation Control Act of 1978 but an open dump and a site located north of Highway 160 remain.

The President said El Paso Natural Gas has voluntarily agreed to complete a "horizontal site characterization" at the Highway 160 site to verify the extent of surface and near-surface contamination in the area. He said it agreed to fence the area and post signs warning of potential hazards. El Paso will also maintain the fence for at least two years.

The company has agreed to add a spray-on agent to the site to help reduce the spread of contaminated materials, underwrite up to \$350,000 of Navajo EPA's costs related to the characterization and remediation of the Tuba City sites, and to test area wells and springs for radioactive-related contaminants, and provide alternative water supplies should contamination be discovered, he said.

The President also reported that mining companies still seek to mine uranium on and near the Navajo Nation, despite the Diné Natural Resources Protection Act that banned uranium mining on the Navajo Nation in 2005.

"There are members of this body here today who suffer the loss of loved ones from the legacy of uranium mining, and will for the rest of their lives," he said. "On the issue of uranium mining, the Navajo Nation has spoken, and our voice has been heard around the world. We will not have uranium mining on Navajoland."

He said his Administration is committed to fighting these efforts and will do all things necessary to fully implement the uranium ban.

The President reported that the Navajo Nation Department of Justice, the controller and Navajo Gaming Enterprise CEO Robert Winters have negotiated a \$100 million line of credit from JP Morgan Chase. The funds will be used for the development and construction of the temporary casino and, later, a permanent casino in Church Rock, he said. Also under

consideration, he said, is the possibility of a permanent casino off of Interstate 40 on the Arizona side of the Nation.

Under the agreement, the Nation will not pay interest on the entire \$100 million. Instead, when it decides to use a portion of the funds, known as a "draw down," the amount borrowed becomes subject to an agreed upon interest rate. He said this kind of arrangement gives the Nation more flexibility in planning construction and operating costs by providing ready access to capital as needed.

The President reported that several of his appointments to the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise Board of Directors have had background checks completed and have been issued gaming licenses by the Navajo Gaming Regulatory Office. His appointments are Maureen Curley of Chichiltah, Martin Lieberman of Scottsdale, Jack C. Jackson, Jr., of Fort Defiance, Susan Ann Lambert of Upper Fruitland, and Sean M. McCabe of Albuquerque.

The remaining appointments are pending background check clearances from the Regulatory Office.

He also said that the Navajo Nation needs to renegotiate its gaming compact with New Mexico, which expires in 2015.

He said that in exchange for a longer compact term, several tribes have agreed to limit the number of gaming facilities to only two, and pay 10 percent of the net revenues through the term of the compact.

"While this standard language may be acceptable to those tribes," he said, "I believe the two casino limitation is unacceptable for the Navajo Nation."

He said he would appoint several individuals, including the Navajo Nation's gaming advisors, to begin negotiations with New Mexico.

The President noted that Office of the First Lady has been beneficial to the Nation through its work with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Navajo Nation DUI Task Force, and, most recently, First Lady Vikki Shirley's appointment as co-chair of the Arizona Meth Project by Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard.

The President also acknowledged the council delegates and their families who honored Diné tradition and former leaders by riding to the summer session by horseback over the past week.

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