

Navajo Nation Council Office of the Speaker
Contact: Sararesa Begay, Public Information Officer
(928) 871-6384
sararesabegay@navajo.org
Dwomochil@navajo.org
<http://www.navajonationcouncil.org>

April 6, 2007
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Recycling effort being organized during Navajo Nation Council Spring Session

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) and his staff met with Carmenlita Chief, an Environmental Specialist, of the Solid Waste Management Program of the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, to lead a recycling effort during the upcoming Navajo Nation 21st Council Spring Session.

Speaker Morgan strongly believes this is an appropriate time to organize the recycling effort because of spring when vegetation grows and there is a renewal of the seasons.

He also stressed that April is the host month of the annual Earth Day. He asserts that as Navajo people we should live the Navajo teaching of having reverence for Mother Earth continually.

“Everyday is Earth Day for us, Navajos. We are the original caretakers of Mother Earth, and we should continue the Navajo teachings that are the fundamental principles and values for building a just, sustainable and peaceful society,” Speaker Morgan said. “Our Navajo ancestors represented an ethical vision of interdependence and the responsibility we share for the sustainable well-being of all life. They recognized the interconnectedness and respect for the community of life, ecological integrity, social and economic justice, democracy and peace.”

Chief and her colleagues are placing eight recycling bins in the council chambers during the spring session for council delegates, legislative staff members and the public. Each recycling bin is designated for the collection of either: paper waste, aluminum cans, and plastic bottles.

There will be four green bins for paper waste, two larger blue bins with clear bags for cans and bottles, and two smaller blue bins for cans and bottles.

Chief said that the upcoming council spring session is “a convenient time to increase awareness and encourage further recycling participation among council delegates, community leaders, and guests since its falls in line with a period of time in April when Earth Day events and celebration take place all around the world.”

-more-

Page 2-2-2/Begay/Recycling Spring Council Session

Chief said, “This time is reserved to instill awareness of and inspire appreciation for Mother Earth.”

The Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) was established by the Navajo Nation Council in 1998 by Resolution GSC-13-98 to provide Navajo communities with learning opportunities in developing proper solid waste management and recycling practices, provide guidance to develop a viable and self-sustaining solid waste disposal system, and provide technical assistance to communities in the clean closures of existing illegal dump sites, according to the Solid Waste Management office. Since its inception, the SWMP has cleaned and closed 74 illegal dumpsites and capped seven landfills at an estimated cost of \$2.7 million.

Chief added that the importance of recycling also concurs with our original, Navajo ancestral instructions.

“Our Navajo traditional teachings have always stressed conservation by taking only what we need from nature and discouraging wastefulness,” Chief explained. “In this day and age, it seems almost impossible to do this when ‘easy,’ ‘fast,’ and ‘convenient’ are product attributes that are highly valued and desired in mainstream culture. It is this wasteful behavior that taxes the health of our environment and because humans are dependent on our environment, we are also negatively affected.”

Chief said that “bulk of the materials that we discard as ‘trash’ are actually materials that can be reprocessed and used over again to make new products.” She said this process is called “recycling”. Materials such as paper, aluminum cans, plastic bottles, and inkjet cartridges (just to name a few) are all recyclable—meaning that their components can be broken down and used again, recyclable material can either be used to create the same product such as using plastic from old plastic bottles to make new plastic bottles or the recyclable material can be used to create a totally different product. For instance, plastic fibers from old bottles can be used to fabricate t-shirts, fleece sweaters and carpeting. Recycling has a number of significant benefits. Recycling helps save energy because manufacturers do not have to engage in the lengthy process of preparing primary materials for their usability. Recycling reduces environmental pollution. Recycling conserves natural resources since manufacturers do not have to penetrate wilderness areas to extract raw, primary materials for new product fabrication. Recycling reduces the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and climate change.

Chief expressed that “As Diné, we have always had an individual and collective responsibility to protect and respect our Mother Earth. Recycling is one way to demonstrate that responsibility, as well as, insuring that our future generations will continue to enjoy the bounties and beauty of Mother Earth—free of pollution and degradation.”