4th Annual Navajo Agriculture Conference Thrives with Rich Information

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. - Navajo Agriculture Department and Navajo Fish & Wildlife Department team up for the two-day, 4th Annual Navajo Agriculture Conference “Drought Management /Climate Control,” April 24 – 25, 2013.

As the conference grows every year, so does the list of presenters. This year over 30 presenters shared their expertise and knowledge on drought concerns and providing tools to continue managing agricultural activities especially through climate changes.

Presenters came from; U.S. Geological Society, New Mexico State University, University of Arizona, University of Colorado, Navajo Veterinary & Livestock Program, Office of the Attorney General, Navajo Department of Agriculture, Navajo Heritage Program, Navajo Department of Water Resources, Navajo Animal Control Program and Navajo Fish & Wildlife.

Attendees of the conference were able to hear the information in English and Navajo, translators were available to ensure clear communication to elders.

Division of Natural Resources Executive Director, Frederick H. White began the conference with a welcome statement and commended his staff in their hard work in organizing such a desirable conference in this time of drought conditions. “This a very important time and we are all destined to
be here, to make adjustments to our agricultural initiatives on Navajo country. I encourage everyone to work as a team so we have better success,” stated White.

Leo Watchman, Department Manager for Navajo Agriculture said, “This year’s conference was very unique in partnering with Navajo Fish & Wildlife and changing the conference to the spring instead of the fall. Our elders have taught us to plan in the spring, and to be ready for winter. Our team wanted to introduce some priority drought concerns now so we can introduce our legislative concerns to council by summer time. We are fortunate to have many elected officials attend our conference, as we need their assistance with our plans.”

Dr. John Idowu from New Mexico State University, talked about the importance of building soil health and avoid soil salinity to maximize crop success. Adding organic matter and properly rotating crops, definitely help during drought conditions. Dr. Idowu also shared a shocking fact; when one inch of top soil is lost, we are not able to recover that lost in our lifetime.

School children arrived in buses and proceeded into Nakai Hall. The youth conference schedule included; Canine Care & Responsibility, Youth Hunt information, Seed Ball Express, Sheep Shearing, Water Activities and Drug & Gang Unit.

Roxie June from Navajo Agriculture reported over six hundred attendees for the two-day conference, over two hundred students participated for the Youth Conference, in previous years the youth attendance has been higher.

Veterinarians from Navajo Veterinary and Livestock Program, Dr. Scott Bender and Dr. Kelly Upshaw-Bia stole the show while demonstrating “Bovine Disease Investigation.” This LIVÉ presentation consists of butchering a calf and investigating its health problems by analyzing the organs and digestive system.

Spectators learned that a cow will carry 65 gallons of water and they have a longer endurance in dry conditions. Because cows live on yeast and small particles of bacteria, it is very important to help
them maintain a clear flow of digestive system. Some simple tips are; buy a salt block, maintain vaccinations and deworming.

One of the most popular Break-Out Sessions was the “Review of New Grazing Mediation Process,” presented by Office of Attorney General. Attendees of this session included, Navajo Nation Farm Board, Eastern Navajo Land Board, and District Grazing Committee Members.

Watchman stated, “Our next priority project is to organize a youth conference, because we believe they are the key to long term success on Navajo Nation.”

Navajo Department of Agriculture website: www.agriculture.navajo-nsn.gov

###