



**Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 22, 2015**

## **Navajo Parks and Recreation Promoting Health and Fitness**

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – A haven of unparalleled beauty.

Words that describe the land of the Navajo people.

For as long as most people can remember, Navajoland has been a mecca for tourists and the film industry. Awe-inspiring scenery, towering rock formations and yawning canyon walls....this is what attracts millions of tourists from throughout the world.

“We are very pleased that visitors are captivated by our magnificent scenery, but the true beauty of the Navajo Nation is our people,” stated Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department Manager Martin L. Begaye. “Our mission is to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations. We are doing this for the benefit of the Navajo people and for the guests who visit our land.”

Tourism studies have revealed that the primary reason tourists travel to Navajoland is to see the scenery. Additionally, more than half of the people who visit the Navajo Nation return for a second visit.

In fact, visitation at all of the tribal parks increased tremendously during the summer of 2015. Begaye attributes this to increased marketing efforts throughout the years.



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“Because of the vastness of our land, many tourists are not able to stop at all of our tribal parks on their first visit. Many tourists often return to see the rest of our parks,” Begaye explained. “We are grateful that our guests enjoy their vacation to the Navajo Nation and come back. However, we want them to know that we have more to offer than scenery. We have many Navajo cultural events, a myriad of outdoor recreation and year-round events and activities that they can experience.”

With a trend to live healthier lifestyles, Begaye said the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department created a series of year-round running events that will be held at its tribal parks. The first event was held in Window Rock in September.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, said “Navajo Vice President Jonathan Nez and I are both strong supporters of living healthy. Not only is running a great way to exercise your body, but it is also an excellent way to exercise your mind and spirit. We hope this partnership between the Navajo Nation and NavajoYes will mark the beginning of coveted events that you will want to experience. I commend all of the entities who are working together to make these events enjoyable and successful, but most importantly, as a venue to keep us strong and healthy. We need healthy minds and bodies who can lead the Navajo Nation into the next generation.”

Echoing President Begaye, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, stated, “As an avid runner, I am extremely excited about these upcoming running events on the Navajo Nation. I enjoy running with my people and guests who visit our reservation. It’s good to hear stories from the people when I run with them. They have stories of overcoming health issues or struggles. It’s empowering. People say I’m encouraging, but I find them encouraging.”

Begaye added, “The Navajo Nation is the ideal place to get fit while enjoying our beautiful land. Nowhere else in the world will you be able to cross four states in one marathon or run near beautiful rock formations that echo the rich history of the Navajo people. Running has always been part of our Navajo tradition. We are therefore, opening our doorway so to speak to



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people who want to experience the embracing culture of the Navajo people. We are partnering with various entities to promote healthy living. We invite everyone to experience what we have to offer.”

Begaye said the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department is collaborating with NavajoYes, which is a non-profit organization that promotes community wellness, lifelong fitness and youth empowerment on the Navajo reservation and the Navajo Nation Division of Health.

NavajoYes CEO Tom Riggenschach stated, “NavajoYes has been an advocate for community wellness and lifelong fitness on the Navajo Nation for over 20 years. We are very excited by the opportunity to work with Navajo Parks and Recreation, the Navajo Division of Health and the Office of the President and Vice President to promote these common goals through the Navajo Parks Race Series.”

The Navajo Parks Race Series includes two remaining races in 2015, which are Asaayi Mountain Run on November 14<sup>th</sup> and Monument Valley Marathon at Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park on December 12<sup>th</sup>. The races in 2016 include Little Colorado River Gorge on February 13<sup>th</sup>; Shiprock Marathon on May 6-7<sup>th</sup>; Asaayi Mountain Run on August 13<sup>th</sup>; Navajo Code Talker 29K on September 11<sup>th</sup>; Four Corners Marathon on October 7-10; Rainbow Bridge Trail Ultra on November 19<sup>th</sup> and Monument Valley Marathon on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

For information about Navajo Parks Race Series registration or entry fees, contact Tom Riggenschach at (928) 429-0345 or [chuskaman@yahoo.com](mailto:chuskaman@yahoo.com)

Visitors can also contact the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department at (928) 871-6647 for information about Navajo cultural events and other events and activities or via their website at [www.navajonationparks.org](http://www.navajonationparks.org)



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