For Immediate Release
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President Shelly Tours NFPI Site, Clean Up to Start Next Week

NAVAJO, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly toured the former Navajo Forest Products Industry site today where clean up will start Monday, Aug. 26, 2013, of the buildings which once housed the Navajo logging and lumber industry.

“I want to get this cleaned up,” said the president. “It is unsafe and a hazard which has been here much too long. This is something I have been wanting to do for years.”

The former NFPI location is under Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency control and listed as a Brownfield site. The Navajo Nation EPA has conducted site inspections and environmental investigations to determine the extent of contamination. Soil samples and well monitoring to the groundwater are routinely conducted on the 70-acre site.

“By cleaning this site up, we’re going to create jobs,” said the president. “We want to hire workers from here, those who are familiar with the site.”
Preference will be given to residents from Navajo and the Red Lake chapter, as agreed by the construction contractor, Economic Development, and local chapter officials.

Accompanying the president on the site tour were Albert Damon, economic development director, and Stephen Etsitty, EPA director, and staff from the Navajo Nation EPA.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Brownfields are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties protects the environment, reduces blight, and takes development pressures off greenspaces and working lands.

The clean up work will start with the deconstruction of the buildings in the northeast corner. The concrete will be crushed and turned into road base for road projects. The larger buildings along Navajo Route 12 will be last to be deconstructed. The project period is anticipated to take one year.

The Division of Economic Development will be proceeding with plans to re-develop the site with business and commercial use.

Navajo Forest Products Industry began in 1951, and was then the Wood Products Industry Enterprise. The operation originally began as a pilot plant to obtain cost analysis and profit margin, but as orders exceeded $43,000, the operation was well underway. It was shut down in the early 1990s as the industry changed, and over concerns raised by an environmental group of Navajo forests being a habitat of the endangered Mexican Spotted Owl.

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