Navajo President Shelly Supports State Plan to Reduce Nitrogen Oxide at SJGS

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly stated his support for a New Mexico state plan that was recently approved by the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board regarding cleaner emissions for San Juan Generation Station near Farmington, New Mexico.

“I support this plan because jobs are going to be protected and Navajo workers are going to get job training. I am thankful the Environmental Improvement Board passed the plan, though I still am advocating to the federal government to consider the economic impacts of the Regional Haze Rule. The Navajo Nation needs time to transition from our revenue dependency upon coal,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly testified at a public hearing in Farmington on Thursday stating his support of the state’s plan to comply with federal Environmental Protection Agency polices to cut emissions according to the Regional Haze Rule. The EIB unanimously approve the state plan late yesterday evening.

The state plan calls for the closure of two of four units at SJGS, a coal fired power plant, by the end of 2017, while installing nitrogen oxide reducing technology on the remaining units by 2016. The plan would still need federal EPA approval.

“This state plan addresses my concerns and perspectives regarding impacts to the Navajo Nation and our region. This plan is an important step forward in meeting the requirements of the federal visibility rule and minimizes the economic impacts to the region,” President Shelly said at the hearing.

San Juan Generating Station employs nearly 90 Native American workers and nearby San Juan mine, which is the sole supplier of coal to SJGS, employs about 230 Native American workers, most of which are presumed to Navajo.

President Shelly has been meeting with Public Service Company of New Mexico, SJGS primary owner, to ensure that Navajo workers aren’t laid off as a result of closing two units at the power plant.
In addition to no workers at the plant being laid off, PNM is providing $1 million for job training for Navajo workers. The job training funding has been made available to students at Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint and at San Juan Community College in Farmington.

“I am thankful that we are protecting Navajo jobs and providing opportunities for Navajo workers. We need to secure and grow the Navajo middle class to create a stronger Navajo economy and these workers are a vital part of that vision,” President Shelly said.

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