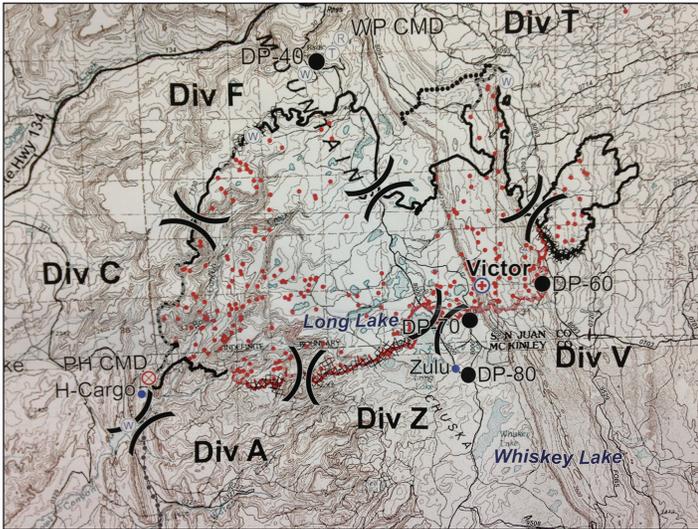




FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 22, 2014

Asaayi Lake Fire donations tracked by Dept. of Emergency Management



On June 23, the Asaayii Lake Fire was reported to be 63 percent contained. The Type II incident management team is demobilizing and will transition the fire to a Type II team on June 26. There has been no loss of life for humans or livestock. Five structures were reported to be burned. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

TSE BONITO, N.M.—Navajo Nation chapters, including Local Governance Act certified chapters, are a sub-unit of the tribal government. As such, they are required to follow the policies and procedures set forth by the tribal government.

The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management was established under Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code, under Article 4, Section 881.

As such, they are mandated by the Council to “lead Navajo Nation efforts, in protecting from all hazards and threats by coordinating: preparedness, protection, prevention, response, recovery, and mitigation, to provide effective and efficient emergency management services.”

Additionally, they are granted general and enumerated powers under Section 884.

This includes “ensuring the

accountability by establishing specific policies, procedures and guidelines for the use of funds, goods, services or any type of assistance intended for use in meeting the requirements of the people in any declared emergency.”

Recent media accounts about donations from the Asaayii Lake Fire being taken without cause are untrue. These sensationalized news stories have been based on Facebook posts from displaced residents affected by the Asaayii Lake Fire.

For more than one week Navajo communities affected by the fire have been under tremendous stress worrying about their homes, livestock and the condition of the land.

Compounding their worries is the inconvenience of having to live in temporary shelters for an unknown amount of time.

This increases their level of

frustration and anger from the emergency situation.

An obvious outlet for many to vent these frustrations have been social media sites such as Facebook, where they have let loose a litany of diatribes and blame on the Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and the Department of Emergency Management.

These have included several death threats.

The need for accountability of donations is mandated by the Navajo Nation Code, which specifically relegates these authorities to the NNDEM.

“The Department of Emergency Management has been in compliance with all applicable tribal laws, policies and procedures since the start of the Asaayii Lake Fire,” said Rose Whitehair, director of NNDEM.

She noted that the negative comments and innuendo posted on social media sites have been erroneously taken as fact by several news outlets reporting on the fire.

“Reporters are supposed to be objective in their reporting and not subjective, which is definitely happening in the case of the donations,” Whitehair said. “The fire has flared the emotions of many, but it must be understood that we are in compliance with tribal law.

“The donations are being accounted for and provided as necessary,” she added.

The Navajo Transportation Complex has been hosting teleconference briefings at 6 p.m. since June 20 at the Emergency Operations Center.

The purpose of the briefings is

to share activities out in the field with stakeholders in the tribal government, from such areas as natural resources, transportation and public safety.

During the June 22 briefing, news of closures at the Newcomb High School and Tohatchi High School was shared. Both locations will no longer serve as shelters for displaced residents or provide meals.

The Newcomb location will continue to serve firefighters battling the blaze.

In operation still is the Naschitti shelter location, which has a total of 10 people at that location, eight adults and two children. Many families were given the green light to return to their homes today.

The NNDEM will have hard numbers on the number of displaced residents tomorrow, including actual evacuees that received donations from the centers.

The Navajo Nation will continue to provide the necessary services to evacuees affected by the Asaayii Lake Fire, including the mandated authorities granted to the NNDEM by tribal law regarding accountability of donations.

The general public is encouraged to direct any questions or concerns to the Navajo Nation EOC Command Center for the Asaayii Lake Fire.

Information: 505-371-8416

