



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Assistant Secretary of Army (Civil Works) Jo Ellen Darcy Visits the Navajo Nation



The Office of the President and Vice President honored Jo Ellen Darcy by presenting her with a Pendleton blanket. Picture are (from left) Delegate Walter Phelps, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Assistant Secretary of Army (Civil Works) Jo Ellen Darcy, President Russell Begaye and Director for Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Winona Benally-Baldenegro.

Window Rock – Jan 27, Presidential appointee, Assistant Secretary of Army (Civil Works), Jo Ellen Darcy, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez discussed establishing a partnership and working relationships to address the Former Bennett Freeze area.

Assistant Secretary Darcy supervises the Department of Army Corp of Engineers' who has responsibilities over programs for conservation and development of the nation's water and wetland resources, flood control, navigation and shore.

President Begaye gave a brief history of the Former Bennett Freeze area (FBFA) to Secretary Darcy and her staff.

We need repairs to wind mills that supplied water for ranchers and home owners in this area, stated President Begaye. In addition, repairs are needed to our reservoirs with much needed earth moving equipment.

Vice President Jonathan Nez said a resource action team has been organized to address the Former Bennett Freeze Area.

“We will have four technical teams that will work together: economic and community development, housing, infrastructure, and public safety,” Vice President Nez said. “We also need to find a Navajo name for this initiative.”

He said changing the name would empower Navajos living in the region, and end the stigma that has been associated with former commissioner Robert Bennett.

“It’s time that we begin healing and helping our people of this area,” Vice President Nez added.

Secretary Darcy and members of her staff also participated in the Interagency collaboration meeting which included numerous Navajo Nation departments, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US EPA, Navajo Housing Authority and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

The Army Corps has committed to assisting the Nation with its efforts in watershed management and planning. In addition, Army Corps had assisted the Nation in the past with mapping and flood plain delineation, both of which are essential for smart development.

“Will the Navajo Nation be applying for the Promise Zone designation”, asked Secretary Darcy.

President Begaye responded with assurance the Navajo Nation has a team working on the application and is confident the Navajo Nation will be selected as a designee.

A Promise Zone designation would allow the leaders of the Navajo Nation to partner with federal government programs to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crimes, enhance public health and address other priorities that would be identified by the Navajo Nation.

President Begaye also encouraged the Assistant Secretary to work closely with the Navajo Nation Washington Office to pursue needed policy changes and potential funding sources through various federal agencies.

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