



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Oliver Whaley steps down as Executive Director of Navajo Nation EPA to focus on his family

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Oliver Whaley, a member of the Navajo Nation who was appointed by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer in January 2019 to serve as the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, made the difficult decision to resign from his position to spend more time with his wife and children and focus on family matters. Navajo Nation EPA Surface and Ground Water Protection Department Manager Ronnie Ben, who has worked with the EPA for 20 years, is serving as acting Executive Director.

“I am very thankful to Mr. Whaley for his service to the Navajo people and I wish him and his family the very best as they move forward. He was very instrumental in making positive changes within the EPA including the remediation of uranium mine sites, advocating for Navajo-owned businesses to conduct environmental clean-ups, and building stronger working relationships with our federal partners. He also played a key role in the recent eradication of marijuana production in the Shiprock area. The Navajo Nation EPA’s initiatives and tasks will continue under the leadership of Ronnie Ben, a longtime EPA employee with extensive knowledge and experience,” said President Nez.



**PHOTO: Oliver Whaley, former Navajo Nation EPA Executive Director, who resigned from his position on Nov. 27, 2020.**

Prior to his service with the Navajo Nation EPA, Whaley was an attorney with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice’s Natural Resources Unit. He also served as a lawyer with the Hadley-

Whaley law firm and gained valuable experience with the Utah Court of Appeals. He earned a Juris Doctorate from the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University, a Masters of Public Administration from Southern Utah University, and a Bachelor of Science in Exercise and Wellness from BYU.

“This was a very hard and emotional decision for my family and I. It’s been an honor working for the Nation and serving the Navajo people. I want to express my gratitude to President Nez and Vice President Lizer for the opportunity and for their support and leadership throughout the past two years. People don't see all the ins and outs, but their hard work and leadership behind the scenes has been an inspiration to me and something I have learned a lot from. I know they care about the Navajo people. The whole Nez-Lizer Administration and the Navajo people will be in my prayers as they move forward with the challenges that lay ahead, but move forward they will and success and progress will continue to be made. Thank you, President Nez, Vice President Lizer, my colleagues and staff at NNEPA, and the Navajo people!” stated Whaley.

“To Mr. Whaley, his wife, children, and extended family, we thank you for all that you have sacrificed and given to the Navajo Nation and our people. Please remember that you are always in our prayers and we wish you nothing but the very best. The Navajo Nation EPA will continue to move forward on the path that Mr. Whaley and his team created,” stated Vice President Lizer.

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