



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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Háyoołkááł Work Group reports on energy development initiatives to the Resources and Development Committee



PHOTO: President Jonathan Nez and the Háyoołkááł Work Group met with the 24th Navajo Nation Council's Resources and Development Committee at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz., on Jan. 14, 2020.

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and the Háyoołkááł Work Group met with the 24th Navajo Nation Council's Resources and Development Committee at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz., to discuss the progress of the Nez-Lizer Administration's energy initiatives for the Navajo Nation. RDC members in attendance included RDC Chair Rickie Nez, Vice Chair Thomas Walker, Jr., Council Delegate Mark Freeland, and Council Delegate Wilson Stewart, Jr.

"The new year presents an opportunity for us to work together and improve communication and coordination to move energy projects and issues forward. With today's meeting, we provided updates and received valuable input and recommendations from the RDC members. We appreciate their leadership and we look forward to continuing to meet and discuss energy initiatives for our Nation," said President Nez.

In April, President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued the "Navajo Háyoołkááł Proclamation," which states that the Nez-Lizer Administration will pursue and prioritize renewable energy development for the long-term benefit of the Navajo people.

In addition, the proclamation created the Háyołkááł Work Group to focus on energy initiatives and other issues. The work group is comprised of officials from the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Department of Justice, Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Economic Development, Division of Community Development, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and the Office of the President and Vice President.

Several issues discussed during the meeting included the Nation's recent acquisition of the rights to 500-megawatts of transmission, solar development initiatives, the Navajo Energy Policy, the proposed Navajo Nation Energy Office, and more.

Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office Executive Director Robert K. Black updated the RDC members on the progress of the Bisti Solar initiative in the community of Huerfano, N.M., which is a 100-megawatt solar utility-scale project. Black stated that following a thorough vetting process, NextEra Energy was selected as the developer for the project. His office is working with NextEra Energy to complete preliminary steps and requirements necessary to begin construction.

In February 2019, the Navajo Nation successfully secured \$2 million from the state of New Mexico to assist with the solar project, in accordance with New Mexico's Energy Transition Act, which established renewable energy standards for the state.

In regards to the Navajo Energy Policy, which was last amended in 2013, the Háyołkááł Work Group has met on several occasions to review and recommend changes to the Navajo Energy Policy to better reflect the Nation's renewable energy development focus and priorities. The recommended changes will be shared with the Navajo Nation Council for their consideration.

"Working together, the Nez-Lizer Administration is confident that the Navajo Energy Policy can be strengthened and clarified in collaboration with the Navajo Nation Council to reflect the new vision for energy development," said President Nez.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer have previously said the Háyołkááł Work Group will continue to serve as the clearinghouse for energy development proposals and initiatives for the Navajo Nation until an energy office is established.

"Our goal is to become a leader in renewable energy in the Southwest and in Indian Country and we can do it by working together with the RDC and the Council," added President Nez.

The Háyołkááł Work Group also informed RDC members that the group is working with officials from Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University to update an existing Memorandum of Agreement that allows the entities to work together to share expertise, information, and input to move energy initiatives forward for the Nation

"We appreciate today's meeting with President Nez and the Háyołkááł Work Group. It was a positive dialogue and we believe it will set us on a path to better communication and coordinated efforts between the Council and the Office of the President and Vice President," said Council Delegate Rickie Nez, chair of the Resources and Development Committee.

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