

“Shirley has a well-rounded background that will serve the Navajo Nation EPA and the Navajo people very well. Her scientific, environmental, and traditional knowledge have proven to be a strong foundation in the previous work she has done for the Navajo Nation. She also has expertise and experience in bridging partnerships and collaborations between the Navajo Nation and federal EPA. We commend her and look forward to working with her,” said Vice President Lizer.

In her previous role with the Abandoned Uranium Mines projects, Shirley spearheaded the Northeast Church Rock Mine Site and the Tronox sites in Cove and Tse Tah, Ariz. She also advised the U.S. EPA concerning Navajo Nation laws and Diné Fundamental Law as Applicable or Relevant & Appropriate Requirements (ARARs) used in the clean-up standards at the Mariano Lake, Mac and Black Mine Sites located in New Mexico. She also coordinated with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on a Source Material License amendment for the United Nuclear Corporation mill site in the Eastern Navajo Agency.

“I hold the Office of the Executive Director of the Navajo EPA in the highest regard, and I have the utmost respect for the agency and its employees. Since 1992, Navajo EPA has been the regulatory authority that safeguards Diné bikéyah dóó Nihookaa’ Dine’é. In my experience working with the agency, it has served as an integral part of government by ensuring Nihimá Nahasdzaan dóó Nihit’aa’ Yádiłhił are kept clean to the highest of standards for our seventh-generation grandchildren,” said Shirley.

As the new Executive Director, Shirley said her goals include strengthening direct lines of communication with the Navajo people through community involvement and Ké, ensuring that currently funded AUMs progress to a level of clean-up with tangible results, and strategizing a way for the Navajo Nation to address the illegal dumping of refuse.

“I will accomplish these goals by exercising stable leadership to create a team environment in the agency. Communication and ké are also crucial in fulfilling these goals. I know this because these ideals are ingrained in me and practiced as a school board member representing four Navajo communities in the Northern Navajo Agency. I am familiar with fiduciary trust responsibilities and passionately believe that projects, legislation, and meaningful change can happen through teamwork and collaboration from all government branches,” Shirley stated.

“I view U.S. EPA and other federal agencies as partners of the Navajo EPA, and I also believe in the inviolability of our Navajo Nation laws. Navajo Nation laws and regulations are in place to protect the Diné, especially when federal regulations become lax in their standards. In the past, only federal laws were used as across-the-board clean-up standards that failed in protecting the Diné. Therefore, it is imperative to safeguard affected communities by ensuring that Navajo Nation laws and regulations are adhered to,” she added.

Valinda Shirley’s appointment is effective immediately and subject to confirmation by the Navajo Nation Council, in accordance with the Navajo Nation Code. Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. will sponsor the bill for confirmation.

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