FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Nez finalizes business site leases for Navajo business owners, LeChee and Shonto Chapters highlight American Rescue Plan Act priorities

SHONTO, Ariz. — On Friday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez met with local leaders and officials at LeChee Chapter and Shonto Chapter, to hear the needs and priorities of their communities regarding the COVID-19 recovery efforts under the American Rescue Plan Act. President Nez was joined by Navajo Nation Division of Human Resources Executive Director Dr. Perphelia Fowler, Division of Community Development Executive Director Dr. Pearl Yellowman, and Division of Transportation Executive Director Garret Silversmith.

Prior to the meetings, President Nez and Navajo tour business owners gathered at LeChee Chapter to celebrate the finalization of two business site leases for Taadidiin Tours, LLC and Arrowhead Campground, LLC, which are Navajo-owned businesses that offer guided tours, campgrounds, lodging, and other amenities that draw thousands of tourists from around the world and create jobs and income for Navajo families.

“We are honored to gather with Rita Tsinigine with Taadidiin Tours and Lester and Roseann Littleman with Arrowhead Campground to sign the business leases that will allow these Navajo businesses to operate, grow, and create more jobs and revenue. I commend them for their persistence and practicing the teaching of our elders, T’áá Hwó Ají Téego, or self-reliance and self-determination. Our administration is proud of you and we support you,” said President Nez during the signing ceremony that included remarks from the business owners and their families.

Following the signing ceremony, President Nez and the Division Directors met with LeChee Chapter leaders to listen to their priorities that include modular bathroom units for local residents, development of a cemetery, and improvements and replacements of existing water and
sewer lines in the community. LeChee Chapter President JoAnn Yazzie-Pioche, Vice President Cassie Scott, Secretary/Treasurer Sharla Hunt, Chapter Manager Andrea Dawes presented on behalf of the community.

The Nez-Lizer Administration has met with officials from nearly 30 chapters in Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona to receive local priorities. The majority of the overall priorities include bathroom additions, water and power line projects, rural addressing, public safety needs, waste management, storage warehouses, road improvements, drought mitigation. A total of 558 projects were submitted to the Division of Community Development – the majority of which are bathroom additions for residents.

“Our administration is meeting nearly every day to develop project listings based on local priorities. Our Nation has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in water and power line projects in the last few years through the Sihasin Fund, Permanent Trust Fund interest, and the CARES Act. Many of those projects have been completed or are in progress now. So, we have to reconcile what’s been completed, what’s in progress, and what’s still needed. It takes a lot of coordination and each chapter faces unique challenges and that’s what we are hearing at the local level,” said President Nez.

Under the leadership of Office of the President and Vice President Chief of Staff Paulson Chaco, the Nez-Lizer Administration’s infrastructure team is vetting projects to develop a comprehensive listing that currently includes over 9,000 projects at a cost of over $20 billion.

“The Navajo Nation has received $1.8 billion through the American Rescue Plan Act up to this point and we have to do our best to leverage the funds to implement changes and improvements. The Navajo Nation has never received this amount of funding from the federal level at one time – this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our Nation to create changes and benefits for future generations. We need water development. The drought that we are in now shows us how important water is to sustain us into the future. Our people are right – water is life, and water is going to be like gold in the future,” added President Nez.
President Nez also met with Shonto Community Governance officials in Shonto on Friday, where Chapter President Roland Smallcanyon, Vice President Marsha Greyeyes, and Chapter Manager Elizabeth Whitehorse-Benally presented several priorities including a powerline extension project that would provide electricity to 42 homes, bathroom additions for local residents, a new storage warehouse, and a public services complex.

The Nez-Lizer Administration is also working with the 24th Navajo Nation Council to create an American Rescue Plan Act office that will serve as a clearing house to expedite requirements and approvals that are needed to begin the construction of projects. President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer thank the chapter leaders and officials, the 24th Navajo Nation Council, and many others who are working together to implement COVID-19 recovery efforts.

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