FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
NOVEMBER 17, 2008

NEW MEXICO CHAPTERS RECEIVED A POSITIVE ACTION PLAN FROM THE DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS PROJECT CONSTRUCTION AND COMPLETION.

Eastern Navajo Agency Council mediates public forum between DCD and officials and administrative staff from all 28 Eastern Navajo Chapters.

SMITH LAKE CHAPTER, NEW MEXICO – The Eastern Navajo Agency Council held a special meeting on November 14 at the newly constructed Smith Lake Chapter Naazbaah Veterans Center to discuss the situation of inactive projects within the Navajo Nation chapters in New Mexico.

With the special meeting being facilitated by Johnny Johnson, ENAC President, the main priority was an update from the Division of Community Development on all chapter projects funded by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. Johnson was concerned about the inefficient status of some chapter projects and how state funding could become obsolete due to the current predicament of the financial crisis.

DCD Division Director, Arbin Mitchell, explained to the ENAC the issues regarding the financial crisis within the State of New Mexico. Mitchell informed the ENAC the monitoring system his division comprised for all capital outlay projects with input from the staff of the Capital Improvement Office, Community Housing and Infrastructure Department and Design and Engineering Services.

In a letter issued from the Office of Cabinet Secretary Alvin H. Warren with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department to Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., acknowledged the State of New Mexico intentions towards a possible reversion of certain project funding for Navajo chapter projects back to the state.

New Mexico Senator Lynda Lovejoy (District 22) was among the guest in attendance at the special meeting. Senator Lovejoy ask the ENAC members to do a
resolution to New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson stating that the chapters are doing everything they can towards getting their chapter projects completed. Senator Lovejoy said that if any funding were to be withdrawn from some Navajo chapter projects, the monies should be reverted back to the Tribal Infrastructure Project Fund.

The Tribal Infrastructure Project Fund was created in 2005 when Governor Richardson signed into law the Tribal Infrastructure Act, which released approximately $5 million of grant funding to help benefit tribal communities lacking basic infrastructure resulting in poor living conditions. The NM IAD conducted a series of workshops to help tribal communities attain funding through TIF for chapter community infrastructure.

Casey Begay, Capital Improvement Office Department Manager, categorized all the state funded projects for the Eastern chapters into five project categories: Active, Stalled, Under funded, Unable to move and Unproductive.

Begay said one problematic area to this grant funding were the quarterly progress reports chapters had to submit reflecting on the scope of work for each of their chapter projects.

“The monies that were appropriated cannot be used for other projects,” said Begay. Furthermore, Begay indicated that his CIO office needed to update the quarterly reports so that both CIO and NM IAD are on the same page in regards to the status of chapter projects funded by the State of New Mexico.

With technology as top priority for DCD, Mr. Mitchell informed ENAC for all the recent endeavors developed under his administration. DCD has created of both the WIND (Woven Information of Navajo Data) System and the web-budget application for chapters to do their budgets via the Internet.

On October 23, Chavez John, CHID Department Manager, help in the presentation for the Woven Information of Navajo Data (WIND) System for all DCD staff.
“We are the only division that has a budget system online,” Mitchell said. His most recent accomplishment is the Master Agreement between the Navajo Nation and New Mexico. With the Master Agreement, Mitchell said several formalities have been condensed to effectively get chapter projects going and completed.

Despite the recent setbacks towards the chapter projects, Arbin Mitchell, DCD Division Director, did extend his gratitude towards the Eastern Navajo Chapters as being part recipients of a project-planning award on behalf of all New Mexico chapters at the recent New Mexico Infrastructure Finance Conference.

Mitchell said this outstanding recognition shows the chapters are working towards self-sufficiency and towards become a viable community.

Scott House, Program Supervisor, gave a presentation on how to provide the narrative portion on all the required documents needed to complete an accurate quarterly report.

The Division of Community Development will continue provide additional public education for all 110 Navajo Nation chapters on how to provide quarterly reports and scope of work indicators for all chapter projects.

###

- 3 -