



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

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Navajo communities continue to receive clean water through the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project



**PHOTO:** Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez meeting with chapter officials in Huerfano, N.M. on Sept. 20, 2022.

**HUERFANO, N.M.** — On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Office of the President and Vice President Chief of Staff Paulson Chaco, and Council Delegate Mark Freeland attended a meeting hosted by Northern and Eastern Navajo Agency chapters, which focused on coordination with federal and state officials to continue delivering more clean water to Navajo communities through the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. The meeting was held at the Huerfano Chapter house in New Mexico.

In June, federal, state, and community leaders came together to celebrate the completion of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project's Cutter Lateral Water Treatment Plant, located in Dzil Na Oodilii, N.M. The new plant now facilitates the delivery of clean water to several rural Navajo communities along the Cutter Lateral, which is one of two major water pipelines being developed as a result of the San Juan River Water Rights Settlement between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico.

Bureau of Reclamation engineers and Andrew Robertson with Souder, Miller and Associate reported during Tuesday's meeting that the communities of Torreon, Ojo Encino, Counselor, Pueblo Pintado, Whitehorse Lake, Nageezi, Huerfano and Tiis Tsoh Sikaad are now receiving clean

reliable water from the San Juan River. In the past, the water pressure would decrease leaving some communities without running water for periods of time.

“Thanks to the commitment and dedication of many past and present Navajo leaders who worked tirelessly with federal and state partners, we are seeing great progress in the delivery of clean reliable water to many Navajo communities in the state of New Mexico. Today’s meeting with chapter leaders demonstrates the continued commitment to maximize the available resources and funding to ensure that water is delivered to as many families and communities as possible. I commend all of the local leaders for driving these projects for our people,” said President Nez.

The other major pipeline, the San Juan Lateral, is also under construction along U.S. Hwy. 491 from the San Juan River to communities located south of Gallup, N.M. The original plan called for the San Juan Lateral to extend water further east to the community of Nahodishgish, but chapter leaders came together with the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources, NTUA, and Bureau of Reclamation to develop an innovative plan, known as Beacon Bisti N9, to deliver water to more communities including Crownpoint, Litterwater, Becenti, Lake Valley, White Rock, and others.

Due to the rise in the cost of construction materials over the years, the cost of the project increased from \$63 million to \$117 million. President Nez continues to work with Congressional members to advocate for additional funding to offset the shortfall. In addition to the funding shortfall, the project has encountered setbacks due to several grazing permit holders that have not given consent for the project to proceed through grazing areas.

“Securing additional dollars to extend waterlines to these communities is a top priority for our Administration. Through our partnerships with Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández (D-N.M.) and others, we are determined to see these projects completed as quickly as possible. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for more clean water for our Navajo people, so it’s very important that we continue to focus on the delivery of basic infrastructure across the Navajo Nation. With the approval of over \$1 billion through the American Rescue Plan Act in July, we will see many more waterlines being constructed across the Navajo Nation. This is nation building and we want to bring more of our Navajo people home,” added President Nez.

Council Delegate Mark Freeland expressed his appreciation to the chapter leaders for driving the projects and remaining persistent in addressing the basic water needs of thousands of Navajo families.

“This is a grassroots effort driven by our local chapter leaders. We are very grateful to our last leaders as well, for their vision and for working with Congress years ago to finalize the San Juan River Water Rights Settlement. Progress takes time, but we remain committed to extending water to more homes and communities throughout New Mexico,” said Delegate Freeland.

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