

JULY 20, 2020

PRESIDENT JONATHAN NEZ  
VICE PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER



# STATE OF THE NAVAJO NATION ADDRESS

2020 SUMMER NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL SESSION







# CONTENT

- 4 Welcome Message - President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer
- 5 CARES Act Funding
- 6 FY2021 Comprehensive Budget
- 7 MOA for Navajo Nation/IHS Water Projects
- 8 Phased-in Reopening Plan for the Navajo Nation
- 10 The New School Year
- 11 Burial Assistance Related to COVID-19
- 12 Drought Declaration
- 13 The Navajo Peoples' Right to Vote
- 13 Protecting the Voices of the Navajo People
- 14 Clean Water Act Lawsuit
- 14 Family Dollar Liquor Applications
- 14 Navajo Health Command Operations Center Report

**Office of the President and Vice President News**  
 P.O. Box 7440  
 Window Rock, AZ 86515  
 (928) 871-7000

**Prepared by:**  
**Communications Director**  
 Jared Touchin

**Sr. Public Information Officer**  
 Crystalline Curley



President  
Jonathan Nez  
and  
Vice President  
Myron Lizer



Yá'at'ééh to the honorable members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Speaker Seth Damon, Chief Justice JoAnn B. Jayne, as well as chapter, county, state, and federal leaders, and most importantly our Diné Citizens. On behalf of the Nez-Lizer Administration, we are pleased to present to you the State of the Navajo Nation Address for the 2020 Summer Council Session.

Our Diné people are strong and resilient. Since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported on the Navajo Nation on March 17, 2020, our Nation has faced and overcome many unprecedented challenges and adversities. We acknowledge that there is still much to learn about the novel coronavirus and many challenges ahead. The strength and endurance of our ancestors continues to live within each of us to this day. We strongly believe that the teachings of our ancestors, the power of prayer, and the data and guidance offered by health care experts has led to the flattening of the curve in relation to new COVID-19 cases and hospital usage and occupancy on the Navajo Nation.

Two months ago, the Navajo Nation was portrayed as the “epicenter” of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the country, but through public messaging that led to increased awareness, public health emergency orders, and prayer, we are now seeing a consistent flattening of the curve. We beat the Indian Health Service projections that indicated that we would reach our peak in hospital usage and capacity in mid-May, but instead we reached it in late April. We cannot play politics with this virus, but we must continue to rely on the data and adhere to the advice of our public health experts.

As the deadline for the CARES Act funding approaches, the Nez-Lizer Administration is putting forth a \$50 million student relief package that will support our Navajo students and provide them the tools and resources they will need to continue their education in a safe and conducive manner. We continue to advocate for funding for water projects, electrification of homes, broadband infrastructure, housing, scholarships, help for Navajo businesses, and to prepare for potential future spikes. We also propose to develop our Nation’s own stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment and other essential items to better prepare us for the long-term.

The Navajo People are watching us closely and they are holding us accountable, and rightfully so. Although we support extending the CARES Act funding deadline, we must put our differences aside, move forward, and work together to use these funds for the benefit of our communities, first responders, and all of our Navajo People.

In closing, we offer our thoughts and prayers for all of those who have lost loved ones and those who are currently fighting this virus. Sadly, our Nation recently lost two of our own law enforcement officers, Michael Lee and Esther Charley. Both officers served our Navajo People for many years. Their contributions and service will never be forgotten. Words are not enough to express our appreciation to all of the health care workers, law enforcement officers, detention officers, EMS personnel, fire fighters, social workers, the Health Command Operations Center officials, and many others who are on the frontlines fighting for our Navajo people. May God bless each of you and may God bless the Great Navajo Nation.



# CARES Act Funding

On July 4, 2020, the Nez-Lizer Administration approved the following funds through Resolution CJN-46-20:

- \$21 million for special duty pay for frontline workers and other essential personnel whose duties are substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency
- \$10 million for Personal Protective Equipment for frontline workers and other essential personnel whose duties are substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency
- \$10 million to ensure that the facilities operated by the Navajo Nation are disinfected and otherwise safe for returning employees and the public seeking governmental services

The Nez-Lizer Administration also approved the following funds, which were requested through Legislation No. 0116-20 developed by the Nez-Lizer Administration through Resolution CJN-47-20:

- \$10 million for food, water, and basic necessities care packages and related items
- \$2 million for computer hardware and software for government offices to improve tele-work capabilities for employees to carry services for the Navajo people
- \$3.5 million for bathroom additions and upgrades for Navajo residents
- \$3 million for P.L. 93-638 health care facilities
- \$2.5 million for expenses to facilitate the procurement and/or improvement of the Navajo Nation's financial system to process Navajo Nation CARES Fund expenditures

The Nez-Lizer Administration proposes to expend the remaining CARES Act funding for:

- Expenditure of \$300 Million for water infrastructure and agriculture projects
- Expenditure of \$150 Million for powerline and solar infrastructure
- Expenditure of \$50 Million for Broadband/Telecommunication
- Expenditure of \$50 Million for scholarships to assist Navajo students entering the health care and public safety fields
- Expenditure of \$60 Million to help Navajo businesses, and promote economic development
- Expenditure of \$20 Million to address housing needs on the Navajo Nation
- Expend the remaining amount for additional chapter projects and direct aid for the Navajo people

# FY2021 Comprehensive Budget

Recently, the three Branch Chiefs met discuss the Fiscal Year 2021 Comprehensive Budget allocations. The Branch Chiefs considered the FY 2021 General Fund Revenue Projection and related budget matters and agreed to following allocations:

## General Fund Allocation

Fixed Costs	\$15,815,144	9.47%
Executive Branch	\$105,568,495	63.20%
Legislative Branch	\$14,892,739	8.92%%
Judicial Branch	\$14,924,653	8.94%%
Chapters – Non-Administrative	\$11,998,969	7.19%%
External Funds Cash Match	\$3,800,000	2.28%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$167,000,00</b>	<b>100%</b>

The fund sources for the \$167,000,000 is as follows:

A.	\$113,507,000	General Fund Revenue Projection (Recurring)
B.	\$25,477,000	Permanent Fund Interest
C.	\$10,958,583	Permanent Fund Contingency
D.	\$17,057,417	Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance

**Capital Outlay Match Special Revenue Fund: \$3,000,000 be allocated to Chapters Capital Expenses replacing use of General Funds.**

**Other Funds \$3,942,583 from Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance (approved in BFJN-08-19) and Budget CS-30-19:**

\$1,800,000	Executive Branch:	Chapter Officials stipends
\$442,583	Legislative Branch:	Election Costs
\$1,700,000	Judicial Branch:	Operating costs
<b>\$3,942,583</b>	<b>OTHER FUNDS TOTAL</b>	



---

# MOA for Navajo Nation/IHS Water Projects

On July 14, the Nez-Lizer Administration and officials with the Indian Health Service finalized a Memorandum of Agreement to allocate over \$5 million from the IHS appropriated Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to support the installation of up to 54 transitional water points, assistance with water fees, supply of up to 37,000 water storage containers, and up to 3.5 million doses of water disinfection tablets for residents living in homes with no piped water access for the duration of the Navajo Nation COVID-19 public health emergency. This large-scale effort is known as the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Water Access Mission.

We know the Navajo people want and need water projects to move forward and get completed and with the signing of this MOA, many more Navajo families will get much-needed water resources. Through the partnership and hard work of the Navajo Nation, Indian Health Service, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority, we are moving forward with these important projects. We are aware of the need for more windmill and earthen dam repairs in many communities and the Department of Water Resources is working hard to resolve those issues as well.

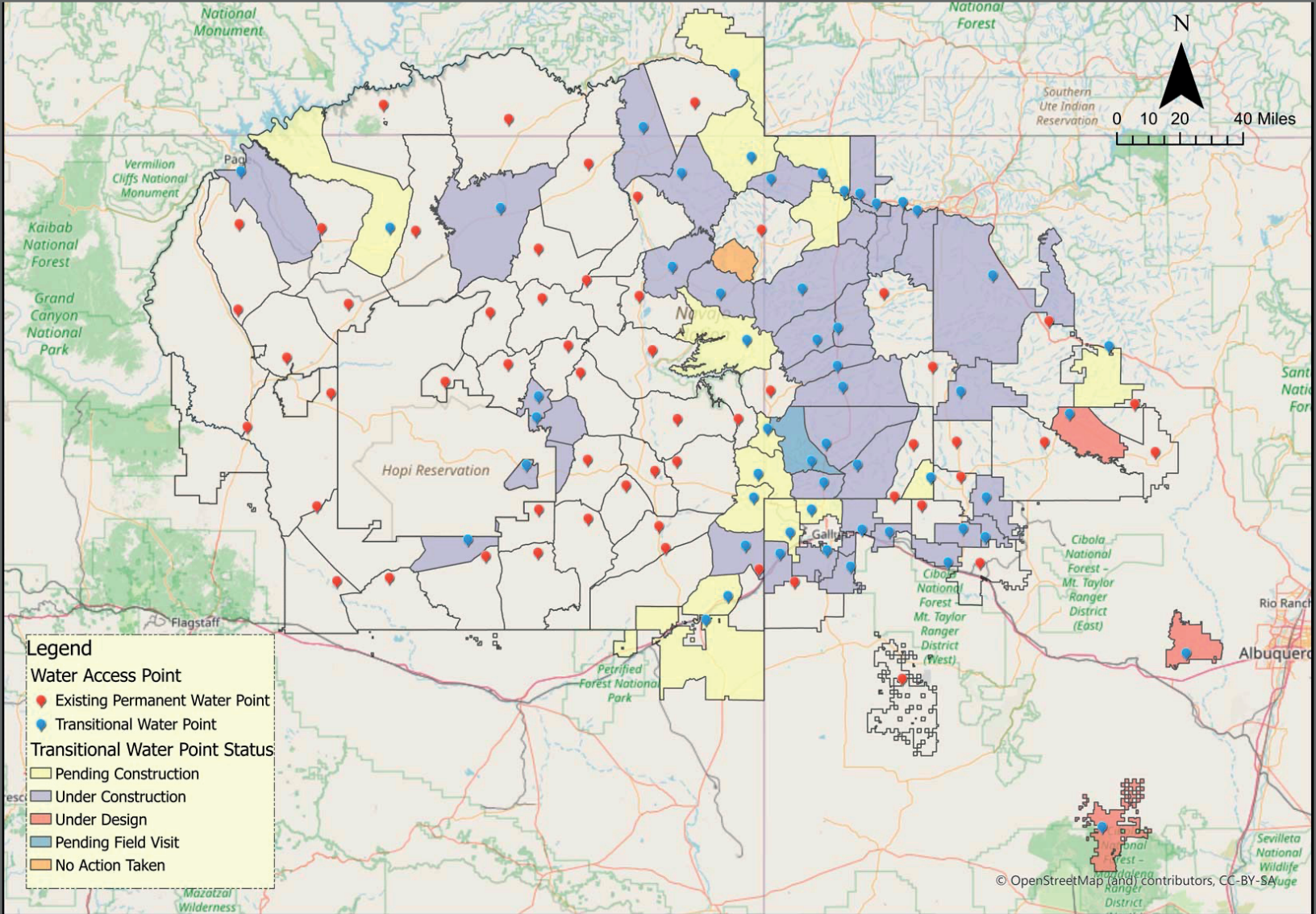
The partnership of these entities developed into a group called the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Water Access Coordination Group, co-led by IHS and the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development, comprised of 21 partners from the Navajo Nation, federal, state partners, public health universities, and non-profit organizations that have been meeting on a regular basis to collaborate on emergency water access response actions and to develop long-term solutions to address the lack of home water access.

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Water Access Coordination Group is a great example of multiple federal and state agencies, and Navajo Nation divisions and programs coming together to address an important water need for our Navajo people. President Nez and I extend our appreciation to everyone involved.

Indian Health Service continues to work with the Navajo Nation, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority on construction and start-up activities for 54 transitional water points, water point operations training for chapter staff, conducting an Interest survey of 110 Chapters to provide resources to support safe water storage, and the development of culturally appropriate public outreach and health educational materials on the importance of safe water storage. The Nez-Lizer Administration remains committed to working together with the Indian Health Service to complete these projects to provide water access for our Navajo people.







## Navajo Nation COVID-19 Water Access Mission

Updated: 7/16/2020 3:51 PM



### Phased-in Reopening Plan for the Navajo Nation

With guidance from health care experts and first responders, the Nez-Lizer Administration developed the “Navajo Nation Restoration and Recovery Plan,” which provides guidelines for Navajo businesses and residents to reduce the spread of COVID-19 continually, directs entities and organizations to implement COVID-19 policies and procedures to maintain a safe and suitable environment, and provides a system of progressive phased-in reopening of the Navajo Nation based on data-driven analysis and input from health experts.

The data shows that practicing preventative measures, such as staying home, washing our hands, wearing masks, and staying alert, has decreased the number of cases. The fight is not over, but we have to find new ways to move forward. We cannot rush to reopen the Nation, however, we must reopen slowly and cautiously, and most importantly, rely on the data and advice of our health care experts.

In March, the Nez-Lizer Administration focused on flattening the curve, protecting the most vulnerable residents, and ensuring access to testing, essential items, and hospital capacity. With a safe, comprehensive, and strategic approach, the



Administration developed the “Navajo Nation Restoration and Recovery Plan” to carefully reopen the Nation with public health-driven data at the forefront.

The plan prioritizes elders and individuals that are at high-risk for severe illness. It ensures the Nation’s healthcare system is responsive to increases in admissions and responds to future crises and any resurgences while allowing a phased path to recovery.

All Navajo entities and organizations must develop policies and procedures to ensure physical distancing between personnel and customers, provide special accommodations for staff who are members of a vulnerable population, provide sufficient and appropriate personal protective equipment for personnel, carry satisfactory disinfectant products for employees, require hygiene practices and cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces, provide regular COVID-19 screening, provide COVID-19 training, and provide standards to respond to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the workplace. Additionally, Navajo businesses and offices are encouraged to adopt preventative measures to reduce COVID-19 exposure, such as increase facility ventilation, install physical barriers, implement flexible work schedules and arrangements, and provide employees with flexible leave policies relating to COVID-19.

Until a treatment or vaccine for COVID-19 is available, life will not return to normal. We each have a collective responsibility to ensure that reopening the Navajo Nation proceeds smoothly and safely. We must follow public health guidelines and use our best judgments to protect ourselves, our relatives and neighbors, and vulnerable individuals. Key public health metrics will determine if and when it is appropriate to proceed through reopening phases.

The decision to move between reopening phases will depend on the rate of new cases of hospital service units, general hospital capacities, COVID-19 testing availability, and availability of contact tracing and case management resources. A color-coded status schedule will indicate the reopening status. Different levels of restrictions are coded red (high restrictions), orange (moderate-high restrictions), yellow (moderate-low restrictions), and green (low restrictions). The public health data trends will help guide the phases.

As we move forward with reopening the Navajo Nation, we have to stay vigilant. We must continue to practice preventative measures, such as social distancing, washing our hands, cleaning and disinfecting high-touched surfaces, and wearing our face masks. These basic precautions will limit the spread of COVID-19 and reopen safely. For more information on the “Navajo Nation Restoration and Recovery Plan,” visit <https://www.navajoreopening.navajo-nsn.gov>.



# The New School Year

Any plan for reopening schools must be implemented with the health and safety of all students, teachers, administrators, and other employees as the top priority. We cannot rush the reopening of schools, whether it is done online or in person, and we absolutely cannot play politics with the health and well-being of our youth at stake.

In mid-March, the Navajo Nation took action to close down schools in order to protect our precious children, teachers, and many others. Parents want to know whether and when the schools are re-opening. The Department of Diné Education (DODE) has taken measures to assist schools with resources in their planning for school reopening.

DODE created a task force that developed the “Roadmap to Reopening Schools.” This document serves as a guidance to school leadership in addition to the three states respective State School Reopening Plans. These resources are being shared with the school leadership along with CDC Guidelines for ReOpening Schools. The documents can be found for reference on the DODE website.

There are different types of schools on Navajo Nation: Public, BIE Operated, Tribally-Controlled, Private, Parochial, Charter Schools that spans three states, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. Each school has their local authority/oversight and governance. Most importantly, each school has individual needs. In order for schools to craft a responsive and personalized school re-entry plan, school leaders are encouraged to use their state school re-entry plan and local demographics and health information. DODE encourages school leaders to involve their stakeholders in their planning process as this is a public health safety issue. Transparency is key. DODE has shared resources with school leaders on surveys that they can utilize.

We understand that parents and students are very concerned about the reopening of schools, and rightfully so. There are many uncertainties and much we have yet to learn about COVID-19, but proper planning and mitigation strategies will help school officials and students to be more prepared.

DODE closed two surveys last week, a parent survey and principal survey and this information is currently being compiled. We believe that it is important to hear from parents and school leaders to help DODE create plans for technical assistance. There is a scheduled virtual forum on Wednesday, July 22, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. (MDT) with school principals and a member of their school board. The panel comprised of representatives from the Navajo Department of Health, Epidemiology and CDC will offer presentations on COVID -19 data on the Navajo Nation and recommended guidelines for school reopening plans. School leaders will have an opportunity to ask questions and share concerns.

There are some initiatives that DODE is involved with to support family nutrition and building an infrastructure for internet connectivity for students at all levels, preschool through college. Food security for students was an issue at the onset of school closure. DODE has provided student enrollment numbers to non-profit organizations to secure food boxes that are distributed to families. Other donations are in process based on survey results from schools regarding technology. Based on the CDC gating principles for reopening schools, virtual learning is one that poses the least risk in the spread of COVID-19. We recognize that many schools will explore this format of learning and therefore DODE is actively addressing the digital divide and to getting student learning and teaching online in the most expeditious way.

The CARES Act budget proposal includes funding to offer parent training on supporting their children with navigating the online instructional platforms. Additionally, DODE and the Navajo Nation Board of Education support a grant proposal



from Diné College and Navajo Technical University, which will provide for training of school personnel on using resiliency-based strategies as our students are dealing with anxiety and grief and loss. This is a capacity building approach that will empower our schools and personnel to be responsive to students' social and emotional well-being.

The Nez-Lizer Administration will continue to work closely with the Department of Diné Education, teachers, students, and many others to help ensure the safety of everyone in the upcoming school year.

---

## Burial Assistance Related to COVID-19

The Navajo Division of Social Services serves an essential governmental function during a time of any emergency declaration on the Nation by providing various human services and social services, such as burial assistance, emergency financial assistance, domestic shelter, counseling, transportation, childcare, and foster care placement.

On April 15, the Office of the Executive Director (OED) began coordinating COVID-19 burial assistance. The COVID-19 burial assistance requests that the NDSS receives from its contracted mortuaries include Navajo individuals who resided off the Navajo Nation. As of July 15, a total of 490 COVID-19 burial assistance requests were received and processed for payment in a total amount of \$1,160,776.50. The COVID-19 burial assistance processed through the OED is funded by Navajo Nation General Fund and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) in a combined total amount of \$1,059,500.00.

There are two eligibility criteria for COVID-19 burial assistance, including: 1) a decedent must have been a member of the Navajo Nation and 2) a decedent must have passed due to the COVID-19 virus. The amount of COVID-19 burial assistance has been increased from \$2,500.00 to up to a maximum of \$3,500.00 because of added expenses such as transportation and to maintain consistency with the BIA-funded COVID-19 burial assistance.

Currently, the Division of Social Services contracts with 11 mortuaries, which handle the burial assistance applications directly with the decedent's family. This arrangement works as follows: a decedent's family member selects one of the contracted mortuaries of their choice, then they contact that mortuary. The selected mortuary will inform the decedent's family members about the Division of Social Services' burial assistance eligibility, application, and required documentation. Once a decedent's family member applies for COVID-19 burial assistance, the mortuary electronically submits the application and required documentation to NDSS. This system works smoothly with the 11 contracted mortuaries. Presently, several contracted mortuaries are overwhelmed with burial arrangements causing an unprecedented backlog and bodies have to be transported to other available mortuaries causing additional financial burden and stress for grieving families.

The increasing demands for COVID-19 burial assistance has required the Division of Social Services to expand to allow the use of other mortuaries that do not currently contract with the Nation. The Division of Social Services created the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Burial Assistance Guidelines, which cleared legal sufficiency by the Navajo Nation Department of Justice. The guidelines will facilitate an efficient payment process for the non-contracted mortuaries up to \$3,500.00 for each COVID-19 burial assistance.

The eligibility is the same criteria utilized for the contracted mortuaries such as a decedent must have been a member of the Navajo tribe and must have expired due to COVID-19 virus. The non-contracted mortuaries are not aware of the NDSS burial assistance program, such as: the application, eligibility criteria and required documentation. For this reason, a decedent's family member will initially contact the NDSS for a COVID-19 burial assistance application if a non-contracted mortuary is chosen. This process is only for COVID-19 burial assistance funded by the Navajo Nation General Fund.

Historically, the NDSS has been providing the regular standard burial assistance for indigent tribal members that is funded by the BIA, which is administered by the Navajo Financial Assistance Services. Since March 16, Navajo Financial Assistance Services has approved a total of 334 non-COVID-19 burial assistance and expended a total of \$799,985.96. The Nation recently received additional \$962,500.00 from the BIA for COVID-19 burial assistance which is need based and the maximum amount paid for burial assistance is \$3,500.00. The Navajo Financial Assistance Services' COVID-19 Burial Assistance Policy is pending review by the Department of Justice.

The Navajo Treatment Center for Children and their Families clinical staff are providing grief support services for individuals dealing with life's greatest challenge of pain and loss of immediate family member to COVID-19, via telephone on a 24/7 basis, through five field offices located in Chinle, Crownpoint, Ft. Defiance, Tuba City and Shiprock. The Shiprock office covers the Kayenta area. The staff served 29 individuals by providing opportunities for them to talk about their loss and aid

---

## Drought Declaration

The Navajo Nation is in a drought once again and with this comes many challenges for the Navajo People and our way of life. In mid- May, Water Resources began to request staff to assist with the repairing of windmills. In June, the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources deemed all staff to be "essential" to assist in providing for the needs of the people and livestock.

In the last couple of months, Water Resources has repaired over 100 windmills, delivered water, provided/repared hand pumps, repaired livestock waterlines, provided storage tanks and troughs. Assistance has extended into Navajo Partitioned Lands and ranches. The Navajo Division of Transportation has also assisted with water hauling efforts but the assistance has been recently limited due to resuming NDOT projects.

We know that many of our people are struggling to provide water resources for domestic use as well as for agriculture and livestock. We are hopeful that through the CARES Act funding, we are able to work together with the Navajo Nation Council to allocate much-needed funding to offset the need for more personnel, equipment, and other resources that are not currently funded so that Navajo families can have more access to water.




---

# The Navajo Peoples' Right to Vote

The 24th Navajo Nation Council approved legislation to cancel the primary election in August citing the need to protect the public from the COVID-19 virus. However, the Nez-Lizer Administration recognizes that the Navajo people have fought long and hard to secure and defend our right to vote, but we strongly believe that the election office has the ability to put in place safeguards that will allow the Navajo People their right to vote in the upcoming Primary Election. To cancel an election where our Navajo people have the right to choose their leaders goes against everything our people have fought for.

We understand the concerns for the health and well-being of our people, but this presents an opportunity to challenge the Navajo Election Administration, under the Legislative Branch, to step up and develop accommodations and safeguards to allow our people to vote during the primary election in August. We cannot simply cancel the election without putting forth a concerted effort to consider alternatives such as drive-thru voting or other options that include social distancing, mask requirements, and other precautionary measures. If the states and counties can hold their primary elections with safeguards in place, then the Navajo Nation should be able to do it also!

Several members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council have expressed legitimate concerns and their support of the Navajo peoples' right to vote. There is also a strong possibility of the Nation facing lawsuits if the Council proceeds with canceling the Primary Election. The Nez-Lizer Administration strongly encourages the 24th Navajo Nation Council to vote "NO" for Legislation No. 0152-20.



---

# Protecting the Voices of the Navajo People

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to call on members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council to protect the voices and votes of the Navajo people by voting down Legislation No. 0153-20, which seeks to obstruct and modify the line-item veto authority that was authorized by Navajo voters in 2009 to reduce wasteful overspending by the Navajo Nation Council. The 2009 initiative language clearly states that the initiative may be repealed or amended by the initiative process only.

The line item veto initiative developed due to the mismanagement of the Navajo people's money by the Council, including millions of dollars that were allocated for discretionary funds that eventually led to the removal and resignation of several former Council members. Since the Navajo people approved the initiative in 2009, the line item veto authority has saved and protected tens of millions of dollars of the Navajo people's money.

Legislation No. 0153-20 would codify the language and make it subject to future amendments and changes and perhaps sets the stage for initiating litigation against the Executive Branch that will lead to divisiveness and disharmony among our Nation's branches of government. Our Navajo People are calling upon us to work together instead of working against one another. We must put the will and votes of the people first. They people have spoken through their votes in 2009 and

we must honor their votes and uphold their voices.

We established an online petition to protect the voices of the Navajo people by opposing Legislation No. 0153-20. Link to online petition: <http://chnng.it/2tdfYhrDW2>. So far, the online petition has received nearly 500 signatures from the Navajo people.

---

## Clean Water Act Lawsuit

On June 22, 2020, the Navajo Nation filed a lawsuit on Monday against the U.S. EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico, arguing that the recent 2020 Waters of the United States rule significantly diminishes the number and extent of Navajo waters protected by the Clean Water Act in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act. The new rule could also adversely impact the amount of federal funding that the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency receives for its water programs.

At this point in time, with climate change occurring around the world, it's more prudent than ever to protect our land, water and air. We, as Diné People, have a duty to preserve and conserve our natural resources to ensure that our future generations have access to clean water, air and land. The previous 2015 Waters of the United States rule provided clarity in protecting our Nation's waters. Therefore, we strongly oppose and disagree with the revised WOTUS. We are optimistic that the 24th Navajo Nation Council will support our Nation's Department of Justice and NEPA in our pursuit of justice.

---

## Family Dollar Liquor Applications

We commend the Navajo people for taking a strong stance against Family Dollar's attempts to secure liquor licenses from the Arizona State Liquor Board to sell alcohol at their existing retail stores located in the Navajo communities of St. Michaels and Tuba City, which resulted in the recent withdrawal of the liquor license applications.

Our Navajo people took a strong position to oppose the liquor licenses and we also had the support of Coconino County and Apache County officials as well. This collective effort resulted in the withdrawal of the liquor license applications, which posed a direct threat to the health and safety of the residents of St. Michaels, Tuba City, and the entire Navajo Nation. Our Navajo People have a long, ongoing battle with alcohol and the devastation that alcoholism causes to our families and communities. Consumption of alcohol has contributed to increased incidence of domestic violence and other criminal activity, motor vehicle fatalities, and deaths caused by exposure to extreme weather conditions.

On June 23, we issued a letter to the Arizona State Liquor Board and the Apache County Board of Supervisors in which they strongly opposed Family Dollar's notice of application to sell alcohol in their store located on fee land in the community of St. Michaels, Ariz. In April, we also wrote to the Coconino County Board of Supervisors requesting their support to oppose the application for a liquor license for the store located in Tuba City, Ariz.

This is a win for our communities and for all Navajo families that live in the vicinity of these businesses. We believe all businesses have a duty to consider the health and well-being of their customers and the communities in which they sell their products. On July 12, we also approved Navajo Nation Council resolution CJY-55-20, opposing the liquor license application for the Family Dollar store in St. Michaels.



We appreciate the 24th Navajo Nation Council's support for the health and well-being of our communities. Family Dollar needs to remember that the Navajo people are the primary customers that contribute to all of the revenue of these two businesses. This issue should not come up again. We do not want alcohol sold at these establishments.



## Navajo Health Command Operations Center Report

### **Background**

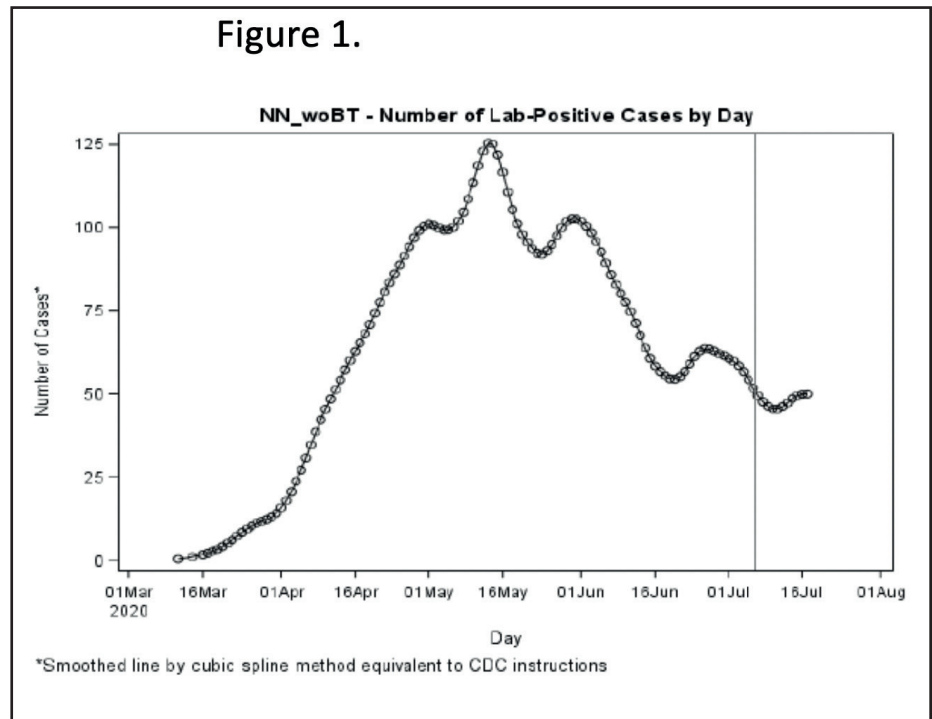
Pursuant to CEM-20-03-11 Navajo Nation Public Health State of Emergency Declaration and NNC Resolution No. CO-50-14 Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) enabling legislation the Navajo Department of Health is reducing the risk and exposure to novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) disease to our Navajo citizens, especially our elders and those with underlying health conditions. There is no vaccine, therefore public health measures care to protect everyone.

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic presides in the United States and globally. The United States is the leading the number of positive cases of COVID-19. Globally, COVID-19 was first detected in December 2019, hence the name COVID-19. The first positive case of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation was detected on March 17, 2020. The first Navajo Nation community impacted was Chilchinbeto, Arizona in the Kayenta Service Unit. Currently, there is community spread across most areas on the Nation. Positive cases of COVID-19 are drastically increasing in the three states (AZ, NM, and UT). If the Nation was the 51st state, we would rank 5th in the United States.

## Summary

The Navajo Health Command Operations Center (HCOC) Situation Report No. 140 shows the following data on COVID-19:

- 72,804 tests completed
- 59,232 negative tests
- 8,593 positive tests
- Median age of diagnosis is 35 years old
- 6,360 positive persons recovered from the virus
- 422 COVID-19 deaths
- 64% (n=269) of COVID-19 deaths among 60 years and older
- In Figure 1, the Nation is experiencing a rebound (increase in cases) in the last 14-days. Mid-May was the peak of positive COVID-19 cases.



## Navajo HCOC Priorities

The Navajo HCOC established a Unified Coordination Group that comprise of Navajo Nation, Navajo Area Indian Health Service, P.L. 99-638 Tribal Health Organization, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Executive Leadership, and external federal, state, and local partners. COVID-19 Response, Law Enforcement, Social Services, and Humanitarian are pillars of the collaborative effort across all entities. The priorities of the Navajo HCOC are:

1. Reduce the spread of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation.
2. Provide for the protection, safety, and security of all tribal, state, and federal workforce.
3. Maintain planning process to effectively communicate incident-related information between stakeholders and leadership.
4. Develop and implement alternate care and isolation within Navajo Nation.
5. Recruit staff and maintain continuity of mission-critical staffing on a rotating basis to respond to COVID-19.
6. Prioritize commodity supply chain, services, and delivery of those testing positive and exposed to COVID-19, with focus on Elderly, High Risk Conditions, and Children.
7. Develop strong local health messaging on COVID-19 prevention, mitigation, treatment, and recovery.
8. Enforce all Public Health Orders.
9. Support alternate care and isolation sites with wraparound services.
10. Maintain fiscal accountability for CARES COVID funding and compliance for federal reimbursement of expenses.
11. Identify current and future needs related to hospital capacity, critical care, rate of community spread, and mortality rates.

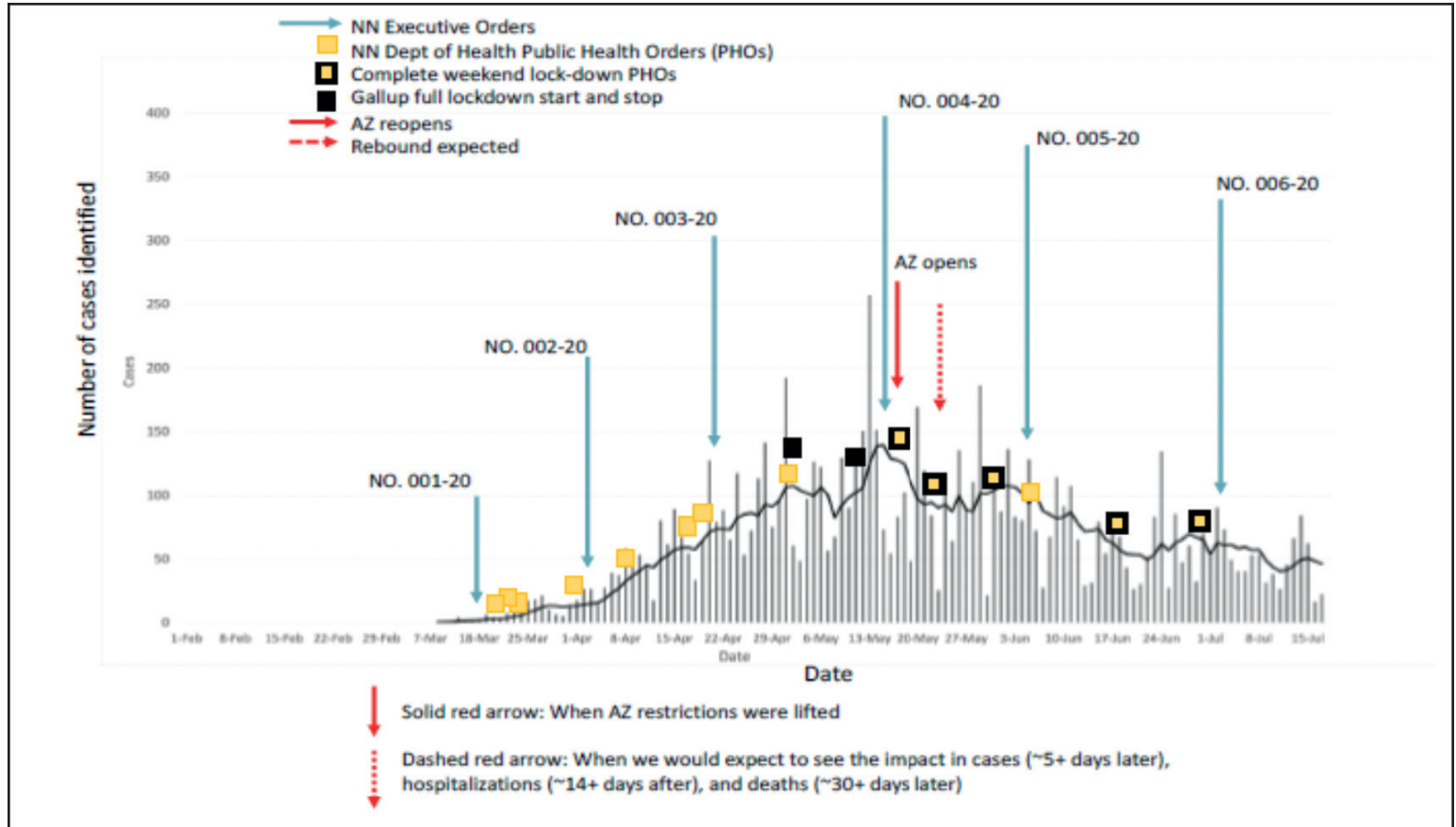
## Community Mitigation Strategies

The purpose of community mitigation strategies is to reduce local COVID-19 transmission. Currently, no vaccine is availa-

ble to treat the COVID-19 disease, the Nation will have to continue to enact interventions targeting individuals and communities to slow the spread of COVID-19. Public health emergency and executive orders guide businesses and Navajo citizens.

### A. Public Health Emergency Orders (PHEO) and Executive Orders to Limit Movement

The launch of the first lockdown on May 14, 2020 supported the reduction of COVID-19 when the cases were at the highest (see Figure 2). Seventeen PHEOs and five EOs were executed to require individuals to limit their movement and contact with others. However, the reopening of Arizona endangered the Nation’s ability to respond and remains a threat because of less restrictive public health measures.



### B. Alternate Care Sites, Non-Congregate Housing, and Healing Kits to Isolate Someone Who is Sick

Two alternate care sites (ACS) were established to provide patient care to non-acute patients with COVID-19. The first ACS is located at the Chinle Community Center, Chinle, AZ and the second is located at Atsa Biyazh Community School, Shiprock, NM. The alternate care sites were in operation less than two months with a total of 12 patients discharged. The hospital capacities during the surge from April to May were not enough to impact the health care system; therefore, utilization of the ACS was minimal. The Chinle ACS remains on warm status for a potential surge in the future. Currently the Shiprock school serves as the ACS and an alternative ACS need to be identified due to the schools plan to reopen. The Nation partnered with the Navajo Housing Authority to oversee the Canyon De Chelly Inn (formerly Best Western). The Navajo Area IHS conducts referral coordination to sites for all facilities. 103 patients have been discharged from Canyon De Chelly Inn and 856 patients from several New Mexico hotels provided by the State of New Mexico. A new location in Kayenta is expected to open soon.

While isolation in an individual room is an option for COVID-19 patients, a tent kit known as healing kits are provided to



those who prefer to isolate at home. 431 healing kits were distributed to patients since mid-May and is considered an activity contributing to the decrease in positive COVID-19 cases.

### C. Case Management and Contact Tracing

Having adequate case managers and contract tracers is critical to manage positive cases and to reduce further transmission. Case management of the 8,593 cases included case investigation, contact tracing, education and support for rapid isolation and quarantine, screening and referral for needed services, and recovery determination. There are currently 2,233 being actively managed in addition to any close contacts. Between May 21 to 27, 2020 488 individuals were trained as case managers, contract tracers, or community connectors. There is a need to expand the workforce by utilizing volunteers and hiring local individuals. A universal contract tracing platform (CommCare) is fully implemented in Chinle, Kayenta, Tuba City, Winslow, Gallup and partially implemented in Shiprock, Crownpoint, Ganado, Utah, and Fort Defiance. John Hopkins University, COPE, and state departments are external partners providing support and technical assistance.

### D. COVID-19 Testing and Vaccinations




The Navajo Nation COVID-19 testing strategy centralizes coordination of administering tests, case notification, case management and contact tracing connection with local health facilities. John Hopkin University researchers and infectious disease experts from health facilities are leading the way in developing appropriate testing and vaccination strategies for the nation. The Nation currently supports diagnostic tests in the form of a swab collected from the nose or throat. Serology testing and a vaccination strategy is being discussed among researchers and physicians for the Nation. Tri-state meetings with Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah streamlines communication and planning between entities, thus supporting government-to-government relationships.

### Reopening Businesses on the Navajo Nation

Several businesses have been shut down for a number of months since the pandemic began in March 2020. In order to safely reopen businesses, the Nation is using gating criteria established by epidemiology and statistical experts following the "Guidelines for Opening up America Again", issued by the White House and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The gating criteria are updated weekly to support decision making about reopening. Figure 3, shows the gating criteria to assess the impact of COVID-19. As of July 19, 2020 the gating criteria team reported that the Nation is experiencing a rebound (increase in cases) and the proportion of tests is not decreasing; therefore, businesses should not reopen at this time.

It is strongly advised to remain closed due to Arizona and Utah experiencing uncontrolled spread that could impact future spreads on Navajo. The Reopening Plan

**Figure 3. Gating Criteria and Reopening Safely**

	Cases	Testing	Hospital Capacity (Within NN)*
<b>Gating Measures for Reopening: Phase 1 - Phase 4</b>	Downward trajectory of (or no) documented COVID-19 cases within the previous 14 days  AND  Speed of epidemic needs to be slowing consistently (as measured by doubling time)	The proportion of tests that are positive has been decreasing over the previous 14-days  AND  There is enough testing capacity such that 20% or fewer of all COVID-19 tests are positive for ≥14 days	Capacity to treat all patients without crisis care:  Inpatient and ICU beds <80% full for 7 days  *Caution: ICU beds in AZ are 90% full.
			

for businesses will be a phased in approach starting from opening 25%, 50%, to 75% of max occupancy at places of business (see Figure 4) and accompanied by additional restrictions. Public health emergency orders are forthcoming to support the reopening of businesses. The decision to move between the phases will be dependent upon the rate of new COVID-19 cases, proportion of positive testing, and hospital capacity.

**Figure 4. Color Coded Schedule for Reopening**

Red Code	Orange Code (25%)	Yellow Code (50%)	Green Code (75%)
High Restrictions	Moderate-High Restrictions	Moderate-Low Restrictions	Low Restrictions

**Financial Report**

The current status of the COVID-19 emergency funds is:

- Budget amount: \$4,000,000.00
- Actual amount expended: \$936,352.85
- Open commitment: \$2,083,575.26
- Budget balance: \$980,071.89

**STAY HOME  
STAY SAFE  
SAVE LIVES**

**FOR THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT,  
PLEASE VISIT [HTTP://WWW.OPVP.NAVAJO-NSN.GOV/](http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/)  
OR FIND US ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND INSTAGRAM.**