

**2007 FARM BILL LISTENING FORUM  
Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture  
Comments**

Good Morning, on behalf of the Director of Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, Mr. John Blueeyes whom could not be with us here today due to other important commitments out of State. My name is Joanna Austin-Manygoats, Senior Planner for the Navajo Department of Agriculture. I'm honored to be here participating in the 2007 Farm Bill Listening Session. The Navajo Nation is responding to five (2 to 6) of the six questions posed for comments. Navajo Nation knows that, in carrying out any conservation program, the Secretary can use program resources to enter into Partnership Agreements with Tribes. In 1994, USDA and the Department of the Interior agreed to a new foundation to improve the delivery of programs and services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. However, the Navajo Nation has not adequately received the commitment from USDA with funds, programs and technical services available to us. We believe that the Nation itself will deliver these programs more effectively to its Tribal members, and to make amendments of policies and programs that will correspond to the needs of the Navajo Nation.

President Clinton envision a strong government-to-government relationship with American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, and on April 29, 1994, at a historic meeting with the leaders of federally recognized Indian tribes at the White House, President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments.

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President Clinton's April 29, 1994, Executive Memorandum outlines principles to clarify the responsibility of the Federal Government to operate within a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes. USDA, too, has somewhat increased emphasis on economic development activities and programs in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, including Rural Development by working at the national, State, and local level to provide financial and technical assistance directly to tribal governments, which is slow in coming and still need increased investments in tribal water and waste programs, housing, community facilities, and business projects.

We are stewards; we are caretakers of the Navajo Nation. This means we have a sacred and shared stake in improving the lives of our people and to open opportunities to all of them.

Under Title II Section 2003, of PL 107-171, The Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture is prepared to enter into Partnerships with USDA. Section 2003 provisions provides USDA to fund "stewardship agreements" with Indian Tribes for the purpose of providing enhanced funding, including USDA funded incentive payments and technical assistance to owners, operators and producers. Navajo farmers and ranchers would participate through Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture in designated projects for implementation of certain conservation practices under the Farm Bill, with consultation and approval of the Navajo Nation with support of the State Conservationist. The Navajo Nation will amend policies, laws and regulation tailored to fit the needs of the Navajo farmers and ranchers, as well as the environment in which conservation measures are applied.

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The Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture has taken the initiative to be the first to "get its foot in the door" to encourage strong Partnership program with the USDA. The Nation knows that in creating this Partnership Agreement the farm policy is effective and fair in the distribution of assistance to Navajo producers. The Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture knows best what the priorities of conservation and environmental goals are in the rural areas. We know the Navajo agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues to be addressed. We know how the farm policy needs to address the unintended consequences and to ensure that such consequences do not discourage new Navajo farmers and the next generation of Navajo farmers<sup>^</sup> ranchers from entering production agriculture.

Navajo Nation wants to arrange with the USDA on crafting the Partnership Agreement on behalf of all the Navajo people enabling our members equal access to USDA program, funds, technical assistance, and education available to them.

Thank you.