



**President Nygren meets USDA Deputy Secretary Vaden to advance food sovereignty, tribal consultations, and research partnerships**



*President Buu Nygren hands USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden a challenge coin at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., where they met to discuss food sovereignty, Tribal consultations, and western service hubs (August 20, 2025).*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren held his first meeting with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden since the Deputy Secretary’s July confirmation. The discussion, held at the USDA headquarters, was positive and included an invitation for Deputy Secretary Vaden to visit the Navajo Nation. Amongst other topics, President Nygren explained how the Navajo Nation’s food sovereignty priorities align with the Trump Administration’s effort to Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) and the importance of strong, reliable nutrition programs across the Nation.

The USDA’s ongoing reorganization was a central focus of the meeting, as the Navajo Nation seeks increased partnership with the Department. President Nygren requested targeted technical support including, planners, conservationists, and range technicians, to address long-standing vacancies and ensure Navajo producers can access Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) programs on par with farmers nationwide. He also urged the placement of dedicated tribal liaisons in state offices and at the prospective Fort Collins,

Colorado regional hub to provide clear points of contact across USDA agencies. These steps would shorten application timelines, expand field capacity, and deliver measurable results for producers beyond the Navajo Nation and across the Four Corners region.

The meeting also focused on the practical barriers to getting healthy, fresh foods to families across a largely rural Nation, which would maximize existing funds, last-mile delivery over 27,000 square miles, and equipment reliability within Food Distributions on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). President Nygren outlined how the Navajo Nation's 1994 land-grant tribal colleges (Diné College and Navajo Technical University) can partner with USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to build solutions in extension, logistics, cold-chain management, and workforce training. In response, Deputy Secretary Vaden directed USDA's Office of Tribal Relations to continue working directly with the Navajo Nation to identify research priorities and targeted technical assistance.