

PORTFOLIO UPDATES

GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP

The Nation continues to make in-roads with agencies and members of Congress. Specifically, since coordinating the press conference and one-on-one meeting with EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, the EPA and departments under its purview have been incredibly responsive towards the Nation. Our relationship with the BIA remains strong and we are working on a number of projects together; and our relationship with Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) is stronger than ever as a result of the passage of RECA in the reconciliation bill.

OFFICE OF NAVAJO HOPI INDIAN RELOCATION

ONHIR has been informed that it will likely close at the end of the current fiscal year (September 30, 2025). The Nation is working on various strategies to ensure that ONHIR's statutory obligations are and continue to be performed.

RADIATION EXPOSURE COMPENSATION ACT

When President Donald Trump signed the "One Big, Beautiful Bill Act," into law, the legislation included a reauthorization and expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. **This has been a priority for the Navajo Nation for decades and a top priority for NNWO.** RECA now provides coverage to Navajo miners through 1990, covers additional illnesses, increases the compensation amount, and provides coverage for downwinders.

TAXATION AND FEDERAL BUDGET

On July 4, 2025, President Donald Trump signed into law the "One Big, Beautiful Bill Act," which was legislation passed by Congress through the reconciliation process. This legislation made sweeping cuts to the federal budget primarily in the form of increased work requirements on Medicaid recipients. **NNWO worked with our partners to ensure that an exemption was made from these work requirements for tribal members.**

On July 24, 2025, the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies released their Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposals. While the House seeks to increase funding across the major Indian Affairs agencies (BIA, BIE, and IHS), the Senate appears to be taking a more measured approach.

AGRICULTURE

On July 10, 2025, NNWO submitted a formal follow-up to the USDA Arizona Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office and Office of Tribal Relations (OTR), outlining Navajo Department of Agricultural priorities discussed during a June 10, 2025, meeting with NRCS and USDA OTR. Highlights included requests to explore cost-share support for vital positions like the vacant range technician role, resolve USDA office space challenges in Window Rock, and expand public education and technical training programs for grazing officials and producers. The update was also shared with Honorable Delegates Cherilyn Yazzie, Germaine Simonson, Carl Slater, and RDC Chair Brenda Jesus to invite their engagement in advocating for FY26 budget support and coordination with Secretary Rollins' team. A response from USDA leadership, including NRCS Chief Bettencourt, is anticipated.

On July 17, 2025, The Office of the President and Vice President delivered an official congratulatory letter to Deputy Secretary Stephen A. Vaden, marking his confirmation by the Senate on June 10, 2025 (51-44 vote) and his formal swearing-in as USDA Deputy Secretary on July 7, 2025. The letter conveyed the Navajo Nation's confidence in his leadership and their commitment to his success in the role. The correspondence also highlighted Vaden's legal and policy expertise, his previous experience as USDA General Counsel and Judge of the U.S. Court of International Trade, and welcomed collaboration with the Navajo Nation.

Ongoing discussions between the Arizona NRCS State Office, NNWO, Navajo Division of Natural Resources Director Mike Halona, and Navajo Department of Agriculture Director Jesse Jim have continued to address delays in establishing a USDA NRCS presence on the Navajo Nation. In the most recent correspondence, the Arizona NRCS office acknowledged a breakthrough in identifying the issue regarding the pending land lease for the NRCS trailer in St. Michaels. According to their message, the delay may be due to an administrative lapse following Navajo staff turnover. Chief Bettencourt conveyed her eagerness to meet with President Nygren at a future date and reaffirmed her strong commitment to ensuring the NRCS office is successfully established to serve the Navajo Nation. She noted her dedication to building a lasting USDA support presence in light of recent layoffs affecting remote staff and expressed interest in discussing long-term strategies for public outreach, technical assistance, and broader community engagement. Both Chief Bettencourt and Secretary Brooke Rollins remain ready and willing to meet with Navajo Nation leadership to advance these shared goals.

Secretary Brooke Rollins announced significant changes to several USDA COVID-era programs, including the termination of the Regional Food Business Centers initiative previously administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). As a result, the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) has received a modified termination letter affecting the National Intertribal Food Business Center (NIFBC). Specifically, all portions of the federal award not linked to an executed, selected, or announced Business Builder Award are subject to termination. While USDA has indicated that active or pending Business Builder Awards may proceed under a revised agreement, the exact scope for NIFBC is yet to be defined. Despite these setbacks, IAC remains committed to its mission to support Tribal food businesses and food sovereignty.

AGRICULTURE

On July 24, 2025 Secretary Brooke Rollins announced a sweeping reorganization of the USDA to realign the agency with its original mission of supporting American farmers, ranchers, and foresters. The reorganization aims to reduce USDA's Washington, D.C. footprint, eliminate bureaucratic redundancies, and relocate up to half of its 4,600 National Capital Region employees to five regional hubs: Raleigh, NC; Kansas City, MO; Indianapolis, IN; Fort Collins, CO; and Salt Lake City, UT. The plan includes workforce reductions through voluntary retirements and aims to lower operational costs while preserving critical public safety and national security functions. These changes will have long-term implications for tribal engagement and service delivery, which NNWO will closely monitor and assess to ensure continuity and accessibility of USDA programs serving the Navajo Nation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On July 10, 2025, The U.S. Department of the Treasury hosted a virtual check-in focused on the implementation of the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) Capital Program and its complementary Technical Assistance (TA) Grant Program. The discussion included Treasury's expectations for Tribal governments regarding performance reporting, best practices for disbursing funds to Native-owned businesses, and strategies for ensuring technical assistance aligns with program goals. Updates were also provided on reporting dashboards, deadlines, and the importance of timely obligation of TA funds. Treasury affirmed its commitment to supporting Tribal program administrators and encouraged continued communication to ensure successful program execution across Indian Country.

On July 17, 2025, Stakeholders convened to provide updates on the SSBCI TA application, including clarifications requested by Treasury. The application has been revised to reflect Change Labs as the new subrecipient, replacing Dineh Chambers of Commerce, and includes updated program goals and budget. Treasury is transitioning to a new outreach model ending jurisdiction-specific outreach managers in favor of structured office hours and real-time Q&A via the SSBCI inbox.

NATIONAL PARKS & MONUMENTS

On July 11, 2025, the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition met to review planning logistics for the Tribal Leader Meeting at Twin Arrows Resort Casino, held on July 14 and July 15, 2025, with a community engagement event also on July 15, 2025. Additional updates covered the Cultural Resources Subcommittee meeting scheduled for August 6 and August 7, 2025 in Bluff, UT; a Pecos Conference panel on August 8, 2025, organized by Carlton Boti at Noonie Campground, and a concurrent Harvard Honoring Nations site visit to observe Bears Ears work. The Inner Monument Gathering will take place from August 18 to August 20, 2025, at Twin Arrows, with commissioners presenting on Bears Ears. Other highlights included a recent letter from the Department of the Interior confirming intent to consult on monument boundary changes, a proposed docu-series on Indigenous co-management by David Borish for potential filming in late September, a GAO report feedback deadline on July 11, 2025, regarding tribal shared decision-making agreements, and notice that Utah Division of Indian Affairs site visits originally planned for July 28 to August 1, 2025, have been postponed due to staffing challenges.

On July 14, 2025, NNWO formally delivered a letter to USDA Secretary Rollins and Interior Secretary Burgum outlining Navajo Nation priorities and recommendations for the future planning and stewardship of the Baaj Nwaavjo l'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument. The letter, developed in coordination with leadership and staff from the Navajo Nation, emphasizes the importance of upholding tribal sovereignty, advancing co-management frameworks, and ensuring meaningful consultation throughout the land management planning process. This communication follows months of stakeholder engagement and is intended to inform the interagency planning efforts currently underway.

On July 23, 2025, Grand Canyon Trust and tribal representatives met to coordinate strategy ahead of expected monument-related decisions. With FY 2026 appropriations due by late September, attendees recommended virtual meetings with administration officials (Interior, BIA, and USDA) to go on record opposing any reduction in monument status, as well as an in-person fly-in to meet with key congressional offices and committee staff. Discussions also included preparations for the Intermountain Gathering from September 18 to September 20, 2025, at Twin Arrows, which will bring together monument coalitions to share management strategies and advocacy goals.

In accordance with a new executive order issued on July 24, 2025, titled “Restore Truth and Sanity,” (Executive Order 14253), President Trump has directed the National Park Service (NPS) to inventory and revise signage and interpretive materials at national parks to remove content deemed overly negative or “insufficiently patriotic.” This includes exhibits on slavery, climate change, and Native American imprisonment. Notably, this directive aligns with efforts to remove Civil War and slavery-related books from NPS gift shops this week. While some agencies are working to restore historical names and narratives, such as in the case of the Washington Commanders’ name change, this trend reveals a broader cultural struggle over how American history is remembered and taught. Alan Spears, Senior Director for Cultural Resources at the National Parks Conservation Association, criticized the directive, stating, “Great countries don’t hide from or sanitize their history.”