



**Native American Producers Success (NAPS) Project  
October 2012-September 2013**

A Collaboration between Dine' Inc., Dine' College Land Grant Office  
And New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service

**Final Project Report**

**Project Goal**

The goal of the Native American Producer Success (NAPS) project is to enhance the sustainability of Navajo farming and ranching operations.

The (NAPS) project is divided into two phases. In Year One the focus is on documenting producer identified barriers to improved farming and ranching operations through a series of producer roundtables; meetings with agriculture service providers including USDA agencies, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, BIA, and UA and NMSU Extension; a farmer and rancher congress; and agriculture resource fairs. In Year Two the focus will be on producer adopted solutions – based on policy changes, education, training, services and investment activities that lead to increased returns and sustainable farming and ranching operations.

**Year One: Identifying Barriers and Solutions**

***Producer Roundtables (October 2012 – July 2013)***

Over 300 Navajo farmers and ranchers, including grazing and land use officials participated in 32 chapter house roundtables identifying the barriers that limit and prevent producers from establishing sustainable farming and ranch operations. In five follow-up regional roundtables, producer representatives from the various chapter houses discussed solutions for overcoming the identified barriers.

*Producer Roundtables* were held at the following chapter houses (see map): Bodaway, Tuba City, Kaibeto, Inscription House, Navajo Mountain, Shonto, Kayenta, Hardrock, Dilkon, Indian Wells, Whitecone, Jeddito, Low Mountain, Steamboat, Greasewoods, Cornfields, Many Farms, Chinle, Lukachukal, Tsiale-Wheatfields-Blackrock, Crownpoint, Whitehorse Lake, Thoreau, Breadsprings, Pueblo Pintado, Ojo Encino, Torreon, Huerfano, Upper Fruitland, Hogback, Shiprock, and Sheepsprings.

*Regional Roundtables* were held in Kayenta, Whitecone, Chinle, Upper Fruitland and Crownpoint.

### ***Barriers and Solutions Identified***

***Barrier:*** Rangeland and Cropland in Poor Condition

***Solutions:***

- Stop overgrazing - enforce grazing and land use regulations, especially tally counts and carrying capacity limits; use fencing to control open range livestock movement; sharply reduce the number of feral horses.
- Improve soil quality – adopt rotational land use methods for both livestock and crops; add soil amendments and re-seeding as needed; reduce the presence of noxious weeds and invasive plants; implement watershed projects to reduce soil erosion and loss of top soil from flash flooding and run-off; promote the establishment of windbreaks to reduce soil erosion; improve drainage in some areas; reduce the use of off-road vehicles to herd livestock.
- Get water to the land – repair existing water-related infrastructure including dams, windmills, canals, tanks, wells, and irrigation systems; establish new water –related infrastructure where needed.
- Improve land management practices – education and training for producers and grazing and land use officials; assist producers and home site permit holders develop and implement conservation and land use plans.
- Increase producer use of USDA and tribal agency land conservation and enhancement programs and services.

***Barrier:*** Lack of Water

***Solutions:***

- Rain!
- Water-related infrastructure – repair existing dams, windmills, canals, tanks, wells and irrigation systems; install new water-related infrastructure where needed.
- Increase producer and community use of USDA and tribal water infrastructure programs.
- Enforce water and agricultural land use regulations.
- Develop water users associations to manage water supply and facilitate cost-sharing.
- Promote adoption of water conservation methods - education and training for producers, grazing and land use officials, and home owners; develop and use of conservation and land use plans.
- Increase producer use of USDA and tribal agency water conservation programs and services.

***Barrier:*** Poor Quality Livestock

***Solutions:***

- Improve breeding stock – use fencing to keep poor quality bulls and sick animals away from healthy herds; vaccinations; culling, improved record keeping.
- Improve quality of feed and forage – enforce grazing permit regulations, especially tally counts and carry-capacity requirements; use fencing to reduce open range livestock movement and overgrazing; adoption of rotational land use methods.

- Improved livestock management practices - education and training for producers including programs like the “beef quality assurance program”.
- Increase producer use of university, USDA and tribal agency extension and outreach technical assistance.

**Barrier:** Crop Production – Small Acreage & Low Yields

**Solutions:**

- Increase access to water -repair water-related infrastructure including dams, windmills, canals, tanks, wells, and irrigation systems; install new water-related infrastructure where needed.
- Use fencing to keep roaming animals out of field crops.
- Facilitate the transfer of land use permits by reducing time in probate.
- Increase producer access to and use of farm equipment (i.e., tractors, plows).
- Education and training for producers in dry land farming, water conservation practices (i.e., drip irrigation) and yield enhancing practices including rotational land use methods.
- Increase producer use of USDA, tribal agency and university programs to increase production and yields.

**Barrier:** Limited Sales of Livestock and Crop Products

**Solutions:**

- Education and training to improve the quality of animals and crops.
- Increase producer knowledge of where the markets are.
- Cooperative marketing to get better prices, share marketing costs – handling transportation, advertising, insurance.

**Barrier:** Limited Access to and Use of Government Programs and Services

**Solutions:**

- Increase producer knowledge of USDA and tribal agency programs/services and receive help with completing applications.
- Government program field representatives provide services/assistance directly to the producers through greater one-on-one contact.
- Provide producers with assistance on preparing conservation and land-use plans.

**Barrier:** Limited Opportunities for Youth to Get into Farming and Ranching

**Solutions:**

- Provide next generation farmers and ranchers access to land and water - make it easier to transfer grazing and land use permits from parents to their children.
- Provide next generation farmers and ranchers with education and training - re-introduce vocational agriculture (FFA) into the high school curriculum; promote 4H clubs in the chapter houses.
- Mentorship programs that bring established and next generation farmers and ranchers together.
- Increase resources and government programs available for young (next generation) farmers and ranchers just getting started.

***Navajo Farmer and Rancher Congress (August 9-11, 2013)***

The cornerstone activity of the NAPS project, the *Navajo Farmer and Rancher Congress*, was held on August 9-11, 2013 at Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona. This unique convening of traditional Navajo farmers and ranchers was structured to build on discussions already conducted across the Navajo Nation at project sponsored chapter house and regional roundtable meetings. These roundtables centered on identifying farmer and rancher needs and gathering data on how USDA and other government service providers could better meet these needs.

Sixty four producer delegates selected through the roundtable process from each of the project target chapter houses and fifteen youth involved with traditional agriculture participated in the *Congress* in a culturally appropriate setting to fully discuss their perceptions of the state of agriculture in the Navajo Nation and review strengths and weaknesses in their own operations. The *Congress* was conducted in the Navajo language with electronically mediated continuous interpretation provided for non-fluent speakers. This convening observed customary traditional social mores to encourage interactions between participants.

The *Congress* provided a wealth of data on perceptions of farmers and ranchers and will help them fully explore their options in terms of maximizing the effectiveness and sustainability of their operations. All proceedings were recorded with selected producer statements transcribed. The major expected outcome of the *Congress* is to increase the potential of Navajo farmers and ranchers through a transformative group process to communicate and act on their perceived needs.

***Agriculture Resource Fairs (August 20-22, 2013)***

Agriculture resource fairs were held on August 20 (Farmington), 21 (Window Rock) and 22 (Tuba City). Representatives from USDA agencies, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, BIA and other agriculture resource and service providers were on hand to discuss their programs and services with producers and the public.

***Meetings with Agriculture Service Providers (September 2013)***

Meetings were held in September 2013 with key agriculture service provider leaders with USDA agencies, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, BIA, UA and NMSU Extension and Congress delegates. The purpose of the meetings was to share with the service providers the results of the producer roundtables and *Navajo Farmer and Rancher Congress*, and explore collaborative opportunities (policy and program/service design and delivery changes) for addressing the producer identified barriers to achieving sustainable agriculture operations.

***Year Two: Call to Action (October 2013-September 2014)***

In Year Two the NAPS project will focus on facilitating producer adoption of solutions to identified barriers based on education, training, services and investment activities that lead to increased returns and sustainable farming and ranching operations.

**For Additional Information on the Native American Producer Success (NAPS) project contact:**

Michael Patrick  
NMSU - CES  
[jmpat@nmsu.edu](mailto:jmpat@nmsu.edu)

Jamescita Mae Peshlakai  
Dine' Inc  
[www.navajofarms.org](http://www.navajofarms.org)

Benita Litson  
Dine' College – Land Grant Office  
[blitson@dinecollege.edu](mailto:blitson@dinecollege.edu)

