



Contact: Erny Zah
Director of Communications
Cell: (928) 380-0771
navajonationpress@navajo-nsn.gov

For Immediate Release
Oct. 8, 2013

Navajo President Shelly and Former New Mexico Gov. Richardson Form Agreement about Navajo Horses

FARMINGTON, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson to continue discussions on feral horse solutions as part of President Shelly's initiative to address what many chapters have deemed a critical land management issue. President Shelly has remained committed to meeting chapter needs while seeking humane solutions to dealing with feral horses. Both the President and the Governor have reached an agreement in principle in which the Navajo Nation would suspend horse round ups making way to halting the sale of Navajo horses to horse processing plants.

The two leaders reached the agreement in a meeting over the weekend.

“Over the last several months since chapters have requested assistance with curbing uncared for horse populations I have been meeting with federal officials and animal advocacy groups to approach this matter in a sustainable and humane way. I have met with Gov. Richardson and we have come to an agreement to find long term solutions to manage our feral horse issue on the Navajo Nation. We will suspend horse round ups and forfeit support for horse slaughtering and horse slaughtering facilities. We have maintained an all of the above approach to managing our horse population and our land. I am thankful for the input we have received from various groups from within the Navajo Nation and throughout the United States. We are now using that input in formulating innovative initiatives to address this issue. I have always advocated for strong long-term solutions and partnerships. I believe the MOU will serve as a gateway for more resources to assist our local communities,” President Shelly said.

Gov. Richardson represents the Foundation to Protect New Mexico Wildlife, which he founded with actor, director and conservationist Robert Redford. The foundation is working to stop the slaughter of horses, including actively fighting efforts to reopen horse slaughterhouses in the United States. The foundation is committed to finding humane alternatives to horse slaughter to deal with the nation's wild horse population and is working with advocacy groups such as Return to Freedom headed by world-renowned horse advocate Neda DeMayo.

“I commend President Shelly for calling for an immediate end to horse roundups and for making it clear that moving forward the Navajo Nation will not support horse slaughter or the return of horse slaughter facilities,” Governor Richardson said. “This is exactly the outcome horse advocates, such as myself, had hoped for.”

The two leaders agreed to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that would suspend horse round ups on the Navajo Nation while the Foundation to Protect New Mexico Wildlife and other horse advocacy groups, including Animal Protection of New Mexico, work with the Navajo Nation to develop and implement alternative policies to manage feral horse populations. Possible solutions that will be explored include equine birth control, adoption, land management and public education.

“Our land is precious to the Navajo people as are all the horses on the Navajo Nation. Horses are sacred animals to us. Both the land and the animals must be responsibly managed. For too long this issue has gone unaddressed putting us in the situation we are today where chapters are facing real problems with uncared for animals damaging local land and domestic livestock. I am thankful we can partner with agencies that have resources to help us find real long-term solutions,” President Shelly said.

President Shelly added that the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources and the Navajo Department of Agriculture will cooperate with Gov. Richardson and the Foundation to Protect New Mexico Wildlife. .

“I look forward to getting to work partnering with President Shelly and the Navajo Nation to help find and develop policies that are not only humane, but offer long-term solutions to managing the Navajo Nation’s horse population,” Governor Richardson added. “I hope that federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Agriculture, as well as horse advocacy groups will also support our efforts with funding.

The MOU is expected to be signed within two weeks.

###