

The Navajo Nation officially reopens tribal parks at 50 percent capacity

Written by By Rick Abasta Sun Correspondent
Friday, 16 July 2021 05:24



Proclaimed a model for bringing pandemic numbers down in a region

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - Tribal parks are reopening. Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez made it official in a signing ceremony at Window Rock Navajo Tribal Park July 6.

Resolution No. CJN-36-21 allows Navajo Nation parks to reopen at 50 percent capacity with safety protocols in place. It also includes provisions for schools to reopen under a required safety plan.

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Council Delegate Carl Slater (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Rough Rock, Round Rock, Tsaile-Wheatfields) sponsored Resolution No. CJNI-36-26, which was passed by the 24th Navajo Nation Council on June 25. That resolution rescinded a number of COVID-19-related resolutions that were passed by the 24th Navajo Nation Council at the beginning of the pandemic.

Nez said more than 70 percent of Navajo Nation residents are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

“We’re ready to reopen here on the Navajo Nation,” Nez announced. “Now, we can get out there and enjoy the beautiful Navajo Nation and visit places like Monument Valley, Antelope Canyon, and the Four Corners Monument.”

A number of Navajo-owned business representatives were in attendance for the signing ceremony, including people from Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park and Antelope Canyon Navajo Tribal Park.

“These were some very tough protocols and they had to be, because the world is watching us,” Nez pointed out. “But we persevered and even Dr. Anthony Fauci said the Navajo Nation is a model for bringing COVID-19 numbers down in a region.”

“We locked down the Nation and we’re still wearing masks,” he said. “Today, we’re honoring our Navajo citizens who persevered and our businesses that got hit hard.”

Nez was joined by his cabinet members and Vice President Myron Lizer, who said that any job that put food on the table qualified as “essential.”

“We’re in this together. It’s been an ‘all hands on deck’ mentality. This is about your livelihood. It’s about protecting our Navajo consumers that are out there and our friends and visitors coming to the Navajo Nation,” Lizer said.

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Council Delegate Herman Daniels (Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Shonto, Ts'ah Bii' Kin), thanked the division directors and business owners in attendance and said it had been over a year since the tribal parks had been closed and that business owners were impacted economically.

"Thank you to the business owners for being patient," Daniels said. "Today [July 6], after the signing ceremony, all of the tribal parks will be reopened safely.

"They have reopening plans," he said.

Council Delegate Paul Begay (Bodaway-Gap, Coppermine, LaChee, K'ai'bii'to, Tonalea-Red Lake), also began by expressing his appreciation for the day.

"It's an especially great day for the business owners," Begay said. "Since last March you have been patient.

"You abided by all health orders and waited patiently," Begay said. "Businesses within Navajo Nation boundaries can now pick themselves back up and get back on the road."

Dr. Jill Jim, Executive Director for the Navajo Department of Health, made her comments entirely in Navajo. She said she first heard about COVID-19 in Jan. 2020.

"Thank you for your understanding," she said. "Although your businesses went down during the closure, you all know that it was for the respect of life that these health orders were put in place.

"It wasn't just us. It was done in accordance with our leaders and health officials," she said

"We on Navajo will continue to wear masks," she said. "That is the message that we need [to] share."

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The Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department operates the tribal parks which include Four Corners Monument, Lake Powell Navajo Tribal Park, Little Colorado River Gorge, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, Tseyi Heritage Center, and Window Rock Navajo Tribal Park.

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