Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Editor,

On Monday, April 29, 2019, I observed a dog that was killed in the middle of the bridge that leads to the Navajo reservation on Highway 566, an 11-mile-long state road that begins its southern terminus at NM 118 and Historic U.S. Route 66 in Church Rock, and the northern terminus is at the end of state maintenance by the Church Rock Mine.

I reported it to the City of Gallup, McKinley County Roads Management Department, the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation (the NN DOT phone line was “out of service”), and the NM Department of Transportation.

Ironically, the McKinley County Roads Management Department and the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation were having a meeting at the Pinedale Chapter House on May 6 at 9 am. On May 8, the dog was still there. I notified these governmental entities to no avail as they all stated that the State of New Mexico has jurisdiction in regards to the bridge and that I should call them.

As a last resort, I e-mailed New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to appeal to her for immediate action regarding poor “Fido” and to direct the appropriate department to remove the bloated and rotting corpse from the bridge.

This is appalling since all governmental entities I contacted use this bridge daily as well as thousands of citizens of the Navajo Nation, the City of Gallup, McKinley County, the State of New Mexico and out-of-state visitors (i.e. “Tourists”).

On May 9, Jennifer C. Martinez, Office Manager, New Mexico Department of Transportation wrote: “Good afternoon, I have been advised by our District Engineer that the animal was removed yesterday from the bridge. Thank you,”

Unfortunately, this was not the case because after further investigation I discovered that the big

black dead dog on the N. M. Hwy. 566 Bridge was never removed as was indicated by Ms. Martinez. It was conveniently pushed off the side of the bridge and lay at the bottom approximately three feet from the river embankment. Whoever was supposed to rectify this situation only aggravated it by their despicable and irresponsible action.

This is unacceptable and inhumane. The dead dog carcass was clearly a public health issue from the start, which is why I reached out to get assistance. Irresponsible government lack of action is not the phrase I'm looking for. Dereliction of Duty better fits the actions aforementioned.

As untimely as this may seem, I believe it has future ramifications, especially on the Navajo reservation where you often see not only dogs but cats, sheep, cows, horses and sadly, humans as well. It is not a question of who was responsible, but rather who would take the appropriate action(s) necessary to protect the public's health and safety.

This speaks to the value that we as humans place, not only on our pets and other animals, but on who we are as members of our communities. And not only on roads where our governments have jurisdiction, but in places where people can be exposed to the bio-hazardous waste of dead carcasses. Fido was eventually laid to rest on May 10 by an NM DOT employee "Gerado.". Thank you, kind sir. You restored my faith in humanity.

Mervyn Tilden
Gallup, N.M.