

 **Spotlight on Climate****Pipeline Through Navajo Perpetuates Environmental Injustice****BY ELEANOR SMITH**

(758 words)

Navajo traditional values and Diné Fundamental Laws are founded on the original teachings on how to live in balance with the Earth and for maintaining relations with the elements of life. Unfortunately, these values are not shared by Federal and State governments nor by the corporations that have been extracting fossil fuel resources from Diné lands for over 100 years. Fossil fuel extraction has given industry reign over tribal resources and a back door to pedal influence within the Navajo Nation Council.

Decades of extraction of our Navajo natural resources should have made us the richest tribe, yet we remain one of the poorest. Decades of carbon emissions from burning coal, oil, and gas contributes to the climate crisis we are now experiencing. Our lands, air, water, and health have been sacrificed for unprecedented profits by energy developers, state utilities, border towns, and distant cities. While the Navajo Nation has fueled and electrified off-reservation cities for over a century, the Navajo people have been left with little economic benefit and bearing all the environmental and health costs.

Today, these abuses continue. The latest is in the form of a 200+ mile long proposed hydrogen pipeline across the Navajo Nation. The developers are proposing to transport blue hydrogen, which is hydrogen made using natural gas, which has a high carbon footprint.

In 2021 TNA realized that the New Mexico State Legislature was pushing a bill to begin hydrogen production in the Four Corners area. TNA knew this would ultimately affect Navajo and began engaging Diné communities to educate on Hydrogen . TNA used academic journals and industry analysis to initiate discussions with Chapter communities about what hydrogen is, how blue hydrogen is made, and the potential impacts of the proposed projects. This outreach has been ongoing since 2021 using scientific research along with Diné language translations to help communities understand proposed projects and prepare them to have meaningful interactions with hydrogen developers.

In TNA's presentations there are four main concerns about hydrogen development on Navajo. Interestingly, these are all issues that the companies proposing hydrogen have avoided addressing in any tangible, sustainable way. These concerns are climate change, the water required for hydrogen production, lack of adequate community engagement, consultation, or consent, and lack of regulations on pipeline safety. Due to all these concerns, TNA has taken the position of opposing all hydrogen development. It is not lost on TNA that green hydrogen is

preferable in some ways, but it still takes more water than Navajo has in today's megadrought conditions.

For the Navajo Nation there is a history of land encroachment issues that make hydrogen development and in fact all energy development a risky process for Navajo communities and Navajo lands. This hydrogen pipeline will cross the Navajo Nation, entering via Hogback Chapter in New Mexico, running through Western Navajo and exiting the reservation at Cameron, Arizona. TNA does not want industry to use any more Navajo land or water, nor for hydrogen to prolong the use of fossil fuels like natural gas. TNA also doesn't support projects that don't have sufficient community benefits. TNA does not support projects that attempt to infringe on Navajo democratic processes and treat Navajo people without due respect.

Thus far, nine of the thirteen chapters within the proposed hydrogen pipeline route have passed resolutions opposing the pipeline. On the other hand, three chapters are supportive of hydrogen, while one chapter remains undecided.

TNA's goal for our Navajo communities is to avoid extreme climate change and to achieve a Just and Equitable Transition away from fossil fuels. The Navajo Nation needs to acknowledge that extractive activities won't sustain our economy, let alone our communities.

What does environmental justice and climate justice look like on Navajo? TNA believes it should begin at the grassroots level in community-led movements that seek and support Indigenous traditional values and knowledge that protects and respects our Mother Earth, Father Sky, and all living beings. The principles contained in the Diné Fundamental Laws should be used as guidelines to establish a new energy policy that embraces community engagement and community-based energy projects that are carbon-free and fossil-free, to create the best pathways for Navajo and our future generations.

For more information, please visit www.tonizhoniani.org/hydrogen

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