

## Navajo Police Department investigates pot, hemp growth on Navajo Nation

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SHIPROCK — The Navajo Police Department has received several reports from concerned citizens from the Shiprock area, including many from the farming community, regarding the possible unauthorized growth of marijuana or hemp in Shiprock.

“We are aware of the concerns brought to our attention by the community and we are working collectively in this investigation with [the] Navajo Department of Criminal Investigation and BIA Drug Enforcement agency on the criminal aspect of these allegations,” Chief Phillip Francisco said. “We have sent our findings to the Navajo Nation Prosecutors Office for further review.”

Through the investigation, the Navajo Police Department identified “grows” of marijuana or hemp fields connected to the “Navajo Gold” business owned by Navajo Nation San Juan River Farm Board President Dineh Benally.

The Navajo Police Department has made administrative inquires to the Navajo Nation legislative and regulatory bodies regarding the growth or farming of hemp or marijuana on the Navajo Nation and those inquires have revealed that the Navajo Nation Council has not passed any legislation or regulation authorizing the growing/farming of hemp or marijuana for industrial production and/or distribution.

In addition to the investigation, the Navajo Police Department has not found a valid business license for “Navajo Gold” on or off the Navajo Nation or any other business-related to hemp or

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marijuana production for sale. Currently, there is no established regulatory body to test and validate or distinguish between hemp and marijuana within the Navajo Nation.

“The Navajo Police Department is dedicated to the safety and welfare of the Navajo Nation citizen. The unregulated and unauthorized production of any product that will be distributed and consumed by the public is a danger to our citizens,” Francisco said. “We would like to remind the communities throughout the Navajo Nation that the growing and harvesting of any illegal drug substance(s) without regulatory authority is unlawful and not authorized by Navajo Nation law.”

In response to the growing concern, the Navajo Police Department will be forming a special taskforce and enforcement team to investigate all unregulated growing and harvesting of marijuana and hemp on the Navajo Nation, regardless of whether or not the product is considered legal outside the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Police department urges the community to report such unauthorized activities to their local police district.

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