

Navajo Gaming faces permanent shutdown if not allowed to reopen this month

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 19 November 2020 15:56



Gaming Revenue, Jobs, Payments Benefit the Navajo Nation

Flagstaff, Ariz. — If Navajo casinos are not re-opened this month, Navajo Gaming faces permanent closure resulting in the loss of millions of gaming dollars that benefit the Navajo people and default on loans that will cost the Navajo Nation millions of dollars.

Brian Parrish, interim CEO of NNGE said, "From the early days of the pandemic we have spoken with a consistent voice of our belief that we can responsibly remain open, at a reduced occupancy with the implementation of first-in-class safety protocols."

Navajo Gaming faces permanent shutdown if not allowed to reopen this month

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 19 November 2020 15:56

“We have studied the science and reviewed the best guidelines at each stage. We have consistently laid out our step-by-step plans to strike the right balance and have detailed the catastrophic consequences of continued closure.”

Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise’s properties are prepared to safely reopen at reduced capacity this month – pending approval of Resolution CN-87-20 – with a focus on restoring vital salary and benefits to 1,180 valued team members – 85 percent of whom are enrolled members of the Navajo Nation.

“This resolution is critical as we work to stabilize the salary and benefits of more than 1,000 Navajo families, to continue to generate millions of dollars for the Nation and to protect the \$460 million investment the Nation has made in gaming facilities and resources,” Parrish said.

In addition to salaries and benefits for 1,180 employees, the majority of NNGE dollars go to four areas:

1. Payments to the Navajo Nation and States — more than \$363 million paid to date.
2. Navajo Nation Loan Return — more than \$183 million paid to date.
3. More than \$328 million in development costs of vital infrastructure that directly benefit host chapters with roads, water, electricity, cell towers, etc.
4. Employee Salary and Benefits — more than \$443 million paid to 1,180 employees representing 105 of the 110 Navajo Chapters.

Additionally, the four casinos and travel plaza benefit the Nation through:

Navajo Gaming faces permanent shutdown if not allowed to reopen this month

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 19 November 2020 15:56

- Internships and high-paying jobs close to home, keeping young Navajo professionals on the reservation near family and elders.
- Annual support of Navajo Nation fairs, student scholarships, food and water drives for local chapters, toys and supplies for local schools.
- Generation of \$1.3 billion in overall economic output.
- Creating over 7,600 direct, indirect and induced jobs.

WHAT DOES CLOSURE MEAN?

NNGE loses \$11 million each month that casino operations are closed and not generating revenue. Permanent closure would come at a cost of \$460 million to the Navajo Nation for the first year. Subsequent years will reflect continued losses of approximately \$219 million due to the elimination of interest revenues, gaming distribution fund revenues, tax revenue payments, and business site lease income, as well as, the economic output currently shared across the Navajo Nation reservation.

A permanent closure would also hurt communities as they would suffer the immediate loss of more than \$807,000 that NNGE provides each year for local police, fire and emergency services.

“Our mission is to enhance the quality of life of the Navajo people by growing a successful gaming economy. The Nation’s vision took years to build, but the Nation has been successful. If it allows its gaming industry to fail, a permanent closure will cause a long-term setback for Navajo economic development, even if it eventually reopens,” Quincy Natay, chairman of the Navajo Gaming Board, said.

Navajo Gaming faces permanent shutdown if not allowed to reopen this month

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 19 November 2020 15:56

“No one saw this pandemic coming, but this is true of most crises. The Nation has faced and overcome world wars, the Long Walk, the burning of crops and killing of herds, the theft of our land and forced relocation, the 1918 flu, tuberculosis, and the theft of children by boarding schools.

“COVID-19 has had devastating costs and without Navajo leadership it, no doubt, would have been worse; however, we are a resilient and adaptable Nation. We rise to the occasion, sacrifice, and find a balance,” Natay stated.

NNGE continues to closely monitor the threat of COVID-19 and has developed a multi-faceted response plan, in order to diligently prevent the spread of the virus. NNGE first created this plan in March and has updated and revised it continuously as new information has been learned.

“NNGE has prepared for eight months to safely reopen and have the most rigorous health, safety and hygiene protocols in place as compared to competing casinos in Arizona and New Mexico that are already open,” Parrish said. “NNGE does not believe permanent closure is the right solution. Our staff are all vetted, licensed, and highly trained.

“We understand and respect the science necessary to mitigate the risks of infection. The importance of work and sustaining our families is part of who we are and who we have always been. We ask that our staff and our enterprise be trusted to do the same now for the next generation.”