NEWS RELEASE:

Hike to Bitatakin at Navajo National Monument ends Hiking Series for Tuba City Service Area.

NAVAJO NATIONAL MONUMENT, Ariz. The Tuba City Service Area of the Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project finished their hiking series for the summer on July 19, 2013 with a trek down to the Bitatakin Ruins at Navajo National Monument with 29 hikers.

When the hikers all arrived, they received a quick orientation from Paul Begay, the seasonal guide, at the Navajo National Monument Visitor’s Center before driving a mile to the start of the hike. Before heading down the rocky trail, the hikers received another orientation from Begay with encouragement to keep together and not to wander off the trail. Deanna Keetsos, Office Specialist, Tuba City Service Area represented NNSDP by participating in the hike. Lena Edison, Health Education Technician, and Edbert Little, Program Supervisor I, stayed behind on top to prepare the luncheon for the group. Evonna Yazzie from Central Office in Window Rock also joined the hikers.

The trail ran along the top of a ridge overlooking the picturesque back canyon country. The stream meandered at the bottom from recent rains and Begay said that the area was expecting a 50 percent chance of rain for the day. The hikers stopped along the way a couple of times for some history lesson from Begay of how Navajos hid in the canyons in 1862-63 when Navajos were being rounded up for the Long Walk. He said that many Navajos living in the area at the present time are descendants of those who survived in the canyons from there to Navajo Mountain.

After about a mile on the trail, the hikers started down the canyon on a trail that went back and forth between sandstones formations. The morning sun quickly began to warm and by the time the hikers reached the bottom, it was hot. Begay again stopped along the way and gave some lessons about the composition of the ground and how plant-life survives in the canyon.

After hiking for a while, the hikers reached the enclave where the ruins are located. Begay was careful not to offend anyone so he asked those who wanted to see the ruins to go with him and those who did not want to get close to the ruins because of traditional beliefs to stay behind. Some of us hikers went up to the ruins while others turned around and started back up to the top.

Mr. Begay provided historical information about the area and the people who occupied the ruins around 1200 A.D. The ruins were renovated back in the 1930s and were in fairly decent shape today but some erosion has started to take place. Some of the sandstone formation along the top has begun to fall. After spending a good hour there, the hikers then started back up the canyon.
It was hot by this time with the sun hitting the hikers along the way. The hikers proceeded slowly up the canyon trail composed mostly of steps made from rocks and lumber. A couple of young runners ran back up to the top as one weary gentleman could only reminisce that he used to do that when he was young and energetic like the runners.

Some of the female hikers helped each other get back to the top and all the hikers were accounted for and they were all safe. It was sizzling hot by this time and a couple of ladies inquired, “Where is the 50 percent chance of rain?”

When all the hikers returned to the top, they went to one of the camp grounds for a cookout of veggie burgers, turkey franks, and variety of salad cooked by Lena Edison and Edbert Little of Tuba City NNSDP Service Area.

It was then the 50 percent chance of rain finally hit and the hikers had their lunch in the rain. It was still raining on that mesa when the hikers headed back to Tuba City for the day. Edbert Little stood smiling with rain pouring down on him waving goodbye to everyone.

The hike was the last one in the series that started with Shadow Mountain on June 7, 2013 with nine participants; Coalmine Canyon on June 14, 2013 with 13 hikers; Middle Mesa with 12 participants on June 21, 2013; White Mesa Arch on July 12, 2013 with 12 hikers; and concluding with Bitatakin Canyon.