FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE  CONTACT:  Chairwoman Gwendena Lee-Gatewood  Ph: (928) 338-2500
Leann Mallow  Brenda Paxson  Ph: (928) 338-1704

White Mountain Apache Tribe Enters Phase One of its Re-Opening Plan
For the Tribal Government and Businesses

(Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Whiteriver, Ariz., August 6, 2020)

Yesterday, the White Mountain Apache Tribal Council approved a phased “Re-Opening Plan” for Tribal departments, businesses, and outdoor activities and a COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place Activation System. The Reopening Plan has four phases that allows the Tribe to cautiously reopen. Each successive phase may be entered after a minimum 14-days of downward trajectory or stable low counts of COVID-19 cases without activation of a Shelter-in-Place order. The Reopening Plan requires the automatic reinstatement of the Emergency Phase should a Shelter-in-Place Order be activated at any time during the reopening process based upon the newly adopted COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place Activation System.

The Reopening Plan requires that the existing curfew and all precautionary measures remain in place throughout each phase of the Plan, including but not limited to: social distancing of 6 feet apart; mask wearing; wiping down commonly used areas; and frequent handwashing.

In addition, based upon the Tribe’s 14-day downward trajectory of COVID-19 cases, and discussions with the Tribe’s public health advisors, the Tribal Council activated Phase One of the Reopening Plan, effective on Monday, August 10, 2020 at 8:00 A.M.

The following measures are included in Phase One of the Tribe’s Reopening Plan:

1. Essential Departments are to continue to work.
2. Departments may resume maintenance work.
3. Construction work may resume.
4. Outdoor work may resume.
5. Departments open to the public by appointment only. The updated policies and procedures for the Tribe restricts public interaction to phone or electronically, unless preapproved by a Supervisor within established guidelines and restrictions.
6. All program and department directors, supervisors and coordinators report back to work.
7. Woodcutting is permitted when there is no red flag warning.
8. Tribal member hunting, including antler hunting, is permitted.
9. Fishing is permitted for Tribal members and their spouses.
10. The Tribe is now officially a “No Mask, No Service” business, meaning face coverings must be worn at all times.

The following departments have been deemed “essential” by way of various Tribal resolutions and will continue operations on a limited capacity following all precautionary measures:

- Apache Enterprise
- Apache Behavioral Health Service (ABHS)
- Business Office
- Client Business Office
- Community Health Workers
- Department of Corrections
- Doxol Propane;
- Elderly Services Feeding Site
- Emergency Operations Center
- EMS Department
- Fire Department
- Forestry
- Game and Fish, including Game Rangers / Dispatchers / Wildlife Technicians
- Isolation and Quarantine staff
- Police Department
- Probation
- Prosecution
- Public Works
- Rainbow Treatment Center Employees (security, IQS and Support Staff)
- Social Services CPS/on-call Social Services staff
- Tribal Court
- Tribal Utility Authority
- Vital Records Office
- WMAHA Force Account
- WMAHA Maintenance
- WMAHA Security/dispatchers
- Other departments as may be designated by written decision of the Tribal Chairwoman.

It is the responsibility of each “Essential Tribal Department” to implement the precautionary measures set forth in the Tribe’s Back-to-Work Plan and their respective department-specific back-to-work plan.

Chairwoman Gwendena Lee-Gatwood stated, “The lives of our people and employees are of utmost importance to the Tribe. It is important that we cautiously move forward with the Tribe’s Reopening Plan to promote the safety of our employees and the general public while providing
tribal members with the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities, such as fishing, hunting, and woodcutting to prepare for the winter months.”

The White Mountain Apache Tribal Council continues to advise the public to take every precautionary measure, including the following:

- Avoiding contact with people who are sick;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth;
- Washing hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol, especially:
  - After using any bathroom;
  - Before eating; and
  - After coughing, sneezing, wiping eyes or mouth, or blowing nose;
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces;
- Maintaining social distancing;
- Staying home when sick, unless seeking medical attention; and
- Covering coughs or sneezes.

Persons with symptoms or questions may call the IHS COVID-19 Call Center at (928) 338-5549 or contact the WMAT Emergency Operations Center at (928) 338-1704.

For more information, contact Chairwoman Gwendena Lee-Gatewood or LeeAnn Mallow at (928) 338-1704, EOC Headquarters.

###