



## THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 31, 2008

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# Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., welcomes air permit for Desert Rock Energy Project after four-year wait, delays

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., today welcomed the approval of the final air permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the Desert Rock Energy Project.

The Navajo Nation has waited more than four years for the permit that will enable it to begin construction on the \$3 billion, 1500-megawatt coal power plant that is being jointly developed by the Diné Power Authority and Sithe Global.

President Shirley received the news of the permit through a phone call with U.S. EPA Region 9 Administrator Wayne Nastri today. He said he appreciated the diligence put into getting the permit issued.

“I know there are many challenges,” President Shirley said. “Native people, Navajo people included, regard the earth as our mother, the sky as our father, and certainly we’re doing everything we can to take care of the air and the environment. At the same time we know that the deities want us to stand on our own, and that’s where Desert Rock comes in.”

The President said the development of the project means needed jobs and revenues for the Navajo Nation.

“As a Nation, we’re working very hard toward standing on our own two feet, and this permit goes a long ways toward bringing all that into fruition,” he said. “We know that there will continue to be challenges, but, hopefully, at day’s end we will prevail.”

Dirk Straussfeld, executive vice president of the Desert Rock Energy Co., called the issuance of the permit “another important milestone.”

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– Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.

“After receiving overwhelming support from the Navajo Navajo Council when it voted 66-7 in 2006, this final permit is another important step in a long process. We are very pleased the EPA has finally put forth the final permit that recognizes Desert Rock’s environmental performance standards are some of the most stringent in the country and would set a new level of performance for coal-fired plants in the United States.”

Steven C. Begay, general manager of the Diné Power Authority, said the permit turns on “a number of green lights to go forward with the Desert Rock Energy Project.”

“There are other entities waiting to move forward with their participation,” he said. “People have been waiting to hear this.”

Among them, he said, are unions that will provide skilled labor and utilities which can now plan to purchase power from the project.”

“The mining permits will also move forward, and here we’re working on our right of way, and I think the proposal will receive a more positive response,” he said.

Doug MacCourt, of the law firm Ater Wynne, who represents the Dine Power Authority, said DPA has worked hard for more than five years to see the permit issued.

"The process has been open, fair and respectful of the Navajo Nation, he said. "Remember that this project is not just about energy. It is about tribal sovereignty, about independence, and quality of life for an entire nation. I am very proud of the DPA and all the members of the Navajo Nation who have worked so hard to make Desert Rock a reality."

Earlier this year, DPA and Sithe sued EPA to compel action on the permit that was more than three years overdue. Today's action was in accordance with a consent decree that required EPA to issue its permit by July 31.

The project will be one of the cleanest coal projects in the world, using the most advanced pollution control technologies to reduce regional haze pollutants and mercury. It will also reduce water use by 85 percent because of the advanced air cooling technologies that will be used, and reduce greenhouse gases by 20 percent because of its improved efficiency.

The project is expected to create more than 1,000 annual jobs during the four-year construction period, and more than 400 permanent jobs. It will bring more than \$50 million annually to the Navajo Nation in direct economic benefits.

President Shirley said the permit cements the environmental performance that the Navajo Nation and its partners have been committed to from the beginning.

The project will now have to get a Maximum Achievable Control Technology Assessment assessment for hazardous pollutants, such as mercury. Given Desert Rock's control technology, officials say that should pose little challenge.

The final key outstanding item is the project's Environmental Impact Statement managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In late 2007, the comment period closed following 10 public hearings in communities around the region.

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