



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPT. 12, 2008

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## Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., Reclamation Commissioner Robert Johnson break ground on \$58 million Navajo Pipeline

**FARMINGTON, N.M.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., joined U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Robert Johnson, Southern Ute Tribal Vice Chairman Gary Hayes and Navajo Nation Council Delegate GloJean Todacheene here Thursday to break ground on the long-awaited \$58 million Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline.

Speaking before officials from the Bureau of Reclamation, the City of Farmington and the partners in the Animas-La Plata Project, President Shirley said that the 28.4-mile-long pipeline will “connect the cities of Shiprock and Farmington together.”

“It’s a long time coming,” he said. “It’s bringing two friends together, bringing families together. That’s just the way it should be.”

When completed, the 24-inch pipeline will deliver 4,600 acre-feet of water to Shiprock, Hogback, Nenahnezad, and Upper Fruitland chapters.

“This is a very tangible means of telling the world that we’re working together,” President Shirley said. “There are families out there that have been hauling water for decades. Man, I’ll tell you, they’re hurting. Now, finally, they’ll have water in their homes.”

Reclamation Commissioner Robert Johnson thanked the Navajo Nation for its patience in getting the pipeline started and said the bureau would see it through to completion.



*Helping to break ground on the new \$58 million Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline project are Regional Director Larry Walkoviak, Navajo Nation Water Management Branch manager John Leeper, Bureau of Reclamation Project Engineer Rick Ehat, Navajo Nation Council Delegate GloJean Todacheene, Reclamation Commissioner Robert Johnson and President Shirley.*

“The Bureau of Reclamation is committed to finishing this project, and we are going to seek the funding to get this project completed on schedule and on budget,” he said.

He said the pipeline will be the means to bring economic development and jobs to Navajos in the region.

The key to the pipeline is the \$500 million Animas-La Plata Project, which is the fulfillment of the 20-year-old

water rights settlement of both the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes.

“We can’t deliver water to the Navajo Nation if we don’t have that dam and pumping station upstream,” Commission Johnson said. “This project is about the future, children, and making the next generation better off.”

President Shirley called the pipeline groundbreaking a momentous day of thanksgiving for the Navajo Nation because it begins construction of one of the largest municipal water projects of the Navajo Nation.

“We’re connecting the very sacred element of water to many more of our families out there,” he said. “I don’t know how many of our families have been hauling water for decades.”

He offered his thanks to the city of Farmington and to the two Colorado tribes that made the pipeline possible.

“This pipeline would not have been possible without the support of our Ute neighbors to recognize it as a project component of the Animas-La Plata Project,” he said. “We salute the Southern Ute and Mountain Ute Tribes for their success in securing a fair and equitable settlement of their water rights. Implementing their settlement has been a long process and the Ute leadership has shown a fortitude that we have come to respect. We appreciate the Utes’ work as the Navajo Nation begins to follow a long path toward resolving its water rights in the region.”

Ms. Todacheene, who is also a San Juan County commissioner, said she and her family used to get water from a spring in a wash that her family strained through flour sacks, and that she didn’t take her first shower until she went to boarding school.

She said what the Navajo people really want is for their young people to return to the Navajo Nation, and that development of this pipeline and the opportunities it will bring will make that possible.

Among those most frequently thanked people during the groundbreaking was Dr. John Leeper, manager of the Navajo Nation Water Management Branch.



*Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., sits behind the controls of a backhoe, with Reclamation Commissioner Robert Johnson during the groundbreaking of the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline on Thursday.*

It was through his tenaciousness that the pipeline project was included in the Animas-La Plata Project and moved forward to development.

The pipeline is expected to quadruple the drinking water supply Navajo chapters, creating the opportunity for more Navajos to find their livelihoods here on the Navajo Nation.

President Shirley and Commissioner Johnson also thanked the New Mexico congressional delegation – Senators Pete Domenici, Jeff Bingaman and Congressman Tom Udall – for their support to see the project through.

“You can’t complete a water project without the support of your congressional delegation,” the Commissioner said.

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