



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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CONTACT: GEORGE HARDEEN
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
OFFICE – 928-871-7917
CELL – 928-309-8532
pressoffice@opvp.org

Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., issues statement on Environmental Appeals Board decision to remand Desert Rock permit

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., issued the following statement on Wednesday:

I want the Navajo people to know that the Sept. 25 decision by the Environmental Appeals Board to remand the Desert Rock Energy Project's air permit to Region 9 for reconsideration was not unexpected and certainly does not mean the project has been cancelled.

Desert Rock remains the most important economic development project in our Nation's history. It will provide thousands of good jobs for our people and fund almost one-third of the Navajo Nation's annual operating budget. It is a key to our saving self, to ending our dependence on the federal government, and to regaining our independence as a Nation and a people.

In August, the Desert Rock project submitted a grant application to the U.S. Department of Energy to include carbon capture and sequestration technology as part of the project. For two years, we've said that the Navajo Nation and Sithe Global would be willing to implement carbon capture and sequestration technology to make Desert Rock the technology leader for the world. This grant application is our plan for that. We're very hopeful the Department of Energy will see the potential to have the U.S. and the Navajo Nation lead the world in coal-powered energy production.

However, this would not have been possible without first amending the Desert Rock air permit. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must still make the changes to the record that they posed to the EAB in order to reissue the permit, and having the permit remanded to the Region now makes this possible.

The only people who say that the project will not or cannot be permitted are environmental activists who are opposed to the project and who have been making such statements for three years. These are individuals and groups who claim to have put the welfare of fish and insects above the survival of the Navajo people when in fact their only goal is to stop the use of coal in the U.S. and the Navajo Nation. In none of their statements do they acknowledge the need for Navajos to have meaningful work to improve the quality of their lives and to provide for their families nor do they claim the actions they are taking to change their own energy consumption. They overlook the fact that unemployment has led to poverty, alcoholism, driving drunk, drug abuse, domestic violence, child neglect and abuse, divorce, teen pregnancy, gangs and ultimately lethal violence on Navajoland, and that putting our people to work will change this. Their objective is not to have the Desert Rock plant be the most environmentally-sound it can be – as one would think environmental groups would support – but to stop the project altogether and to stop all coal mining on the Navajo Nation and elsewhere.

From the beginning of their relationship with the Navajo Nation, the Desert Rock Energy Project, LLC, and Sithe Global agreed to go beyond what is required of them. Their business model is among the first the Navajo Nation has seen to have legal issues settled in our Navajo courts, to use our Navajo people to build and work at the plant, to use our coal, our water and place the plant on our land, and pay us handsomely for all that. And, for the first time, the Navajo Nation has the option to become an equity partner in the plant.

It remains our hope that carbon capture and sequestration technology will be part of Desert Rock. By the end of the year, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Agency will complete a biological opinion and the BIA will complete its environmental impact statement. We are persevering in our efforts to obtain the necessary permits to build the plant, put our people to work, and bring independence back to the Navajo Nation.

Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr., President
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