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Cameron Chapter awarded \$500k, residential electricity for families living off the grid

CAMERON, Ariz. – During an informal report to the 22nd Navajo Nation Council on July 17, Grand Canyon Trust announced that Cameron Chapter was awarded a grant in the amount of \$500,000 for residential photovoltaic systems.

The grant will be used to help bring reliable residential electricity to some families living in remote locations away from power lines.

“Recently we learned of the grant opportunity with the Grand Canyon Trust, in response Chapter Vice President Dorothy Scott, with the help of my District Assistant Shirley Watkins, worked diligently to submit an application and the \$500K award is a direct result of their labor,” said Council Delegate Walter Phelps.

The grant was awarded from the Renewable Energy Investment Fund, which was created from a 2005 settlement agreement between Grand Canyon Trust and the owners of the Springerville Generating Station.

The grant to Cameron will be one of the final awards from the nearly depleted \$5 million fund.

“We are excited to bring electrical power to the residents of Cameron Chapter,” stated Dorothy Scott, Vice President of Cameron Chapter. “This grant will help to fulfill a much needed service and will ultimately help to improve the quality of life for our people living within the Cameron area.”

Bringing electric power to the citizens of the Cameron Chapter has long been a priority for local leaders and the community. In remote areas of chapter, where many chapter members reside, it can be difficult to tie into a utility-grid power.

“We are thrilled to be building on our existing partnerships with local chapters, especially between two Chapters we have long had relations with, both the Cameron Chapter and Shonto Chapter,” said Tony Skrelunas, Native America Program Director for the Grand Canyon Trust.

The project is also supported by additional revenue, including \$84,000 committed by the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission, plus an additional \$6,000 from the Chapter.

“A few years back the Cameron chapter successfully participated in a grant opportunity resulting in 100 solar units benefiting residents living in rural areas,” remarked Delegate Phelps. “Due to aging and some which became non-functional from lack of maintenance the chapter engaged in searching for resources to address the problem for residents.”

Much of the Cameron area has been affected by the Bennett Freeze Act, federal legislation which halted development of tribal land for 40 years while a border dispute between the Navajo and Hopi tribes was negotiated.

When the Bennett Freeze Act was finally lifted in 2009, it was estimated that 60 percent of the residents affected by it were without electricity, and many of these residences fall within the Cameron Chapter.

“The current grant will serve to be of direct benefit especially to those living off the grid in isolated areas of the Cameron community. 100% of the Cameron chapter is located within the former Bennett Freeze area so this award is extremely significant,” Delegate Phelps stated.

The photovoltaic systems will be installed and maintained by Shaa'tohi (Shonto) Energy Solutions, a company under the Shonto Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), Inc.

The company, which is Navajo owned and based on the Navajo Nation, is experienced in designing highly dependable power systems for off-grid applications in remote environments and harsh climates.

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