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President Shelly Signs NGS Lease Extension Legislation



Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly (center) signs the NGS legislation and lease extension while the Navajo negotiating team, Navajo Council Speaker Johnny Naize (front far right), and staff from Salt River Project, including Vice President John Hoopes (seated between Shelly and Naize), witness the signing.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed a 25-year lease extension worth more than \$1 billion in revenue during a signing ceremony Tuesday afternoon. The lease extension is for Navajo Generating Station.

The lease extension brings the Navajo Nation about \$1.3 billion in revenues from Navajo Generation Station through 2044.

“I know for nearly 3 years, we negotiated our way to what is before us today. Countless hours have been devoted to ensuring that Navajo jobs are maintained for an extra 25 years,” said President Shelly before the signing ceremony.

The lease states the Navajo Nation would receive approximately \$42 million a year in lease payments beginning 2019 through 2044. That annual payment is substantially larger than \$608,400 outlined in the original lease approved in 1969.

Another important aspect of the lease extension is jobs, President Shelly said before the signing ceremony.

“We are protecting existing jobs on the Navajo Nation,” said President Shelly. “We are building a job base well into the future. This is part of our drive for economic self-sufficiency.”

Between NGS and Kayenta Mine, the sole coal supplier for NGS, more than 900 people are employed and more than 85 percent are Native American, but most are Navajo.

President Shelly appointed a lease negotiating team shortly after he took office. The eight person negotiating team, led by Navajo Nation Attorney General Harrison Tsosie, finalized terms of the lease before Navajo Council made other amendments.

“We are thankful that the owners are committed for at least 25 years,” Tsosie said.

SRP Vice President John Hoopes said the lease negotiations provided SRP a chance to learn about Navajo people and their values.

“One of the most significant benefits of the negotiations we learned much more about you, your priorities about your culture about the things that you value I hope that will aid our relationship going forward,” Hoopes said during the signing morning.

Navajo Council Speaker Johnny Naize said he was thankful for SRP’s patience as the Council came to agreement regarding the lease extension.

“They stuck with us throughout the time, we continually, things will come out properly as it should be at the end, which it did,” Speaker Naize said.

President Shelly said, “now it’s legal” after signing the lease and legislation.

The lease extension now goes to the other NGS owners for signatures and then to the Department of Interior for final approval. The original lease is scheduled to expire in 2019.

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