



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2, 2019

President Nez discusses progress of solar energy project with Navajo Hopi Land Commission members

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez met with Navajo Hopi Land Commission members at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, where he discussed the progress and path forward for the development of the Paragon Bitsi Ranch solar development project in the Navajo community of Huerfano in the state of New Mexico.

President Nez highlighted several matters that the Nez-Lizer Administration have undertaken to move the solar project forward including designating \$2 million in New Mexico capital outlay funds that was approved by New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, to be used for this particular project. This project would also align with the state of New Mexico's "Energy Transition Act," which established new renewable energy standards.

In addition, the Nez-Lizer Administration is proposing additional funds in the upcoming Navajo Nation FY2020 Comprehensive Budget to fully establish a Navajo Energy Office under the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources that would serve as the "clearinghouse" for energy development for the entire Nation.

President Nez, who was part of the Navajo Hopi Land Commission when he was a member of the Navajo Nation Council, acknowledged the work of previous Navajo Hopi Land Commission members who began working on this initiative years ago.



PHOTO: President Jonathan Nez meeting with Navajo-Hopi Land Commission members at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz. on Aug. 1, 2019.

“Based on the work of past and current leaders, this project is now in a position to move forward. Working together, we can make this project a reality and it can serve as an example for future renewable energy projects in other communities as well,” said President Nez, who was joined by the Executive Director for the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Officer Robert Black.

Black’s office has been coordinating with the commission members, the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Huerfano Chapter, and other stakeholders to complete the necessary steps before construction can begin.

On April 2, President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued the historic “Navajo Háyołkááł (Sunrise) Proclamation” stating that the Navajo Nation will pursue and prioritize renewable energy development for the long-term benefit of the Navajo people. Soon after, the Office of the President and Vice President established the Háyołkááł Work Group to address various energy matters including renewable energy projects.

Rebecca Kauffman, energy consultant with the Division of Natural Resources, provided a presentation on the progress of the project, which would use approximately 660 acres of land in Huerfano for the solar utility scale development.

Last year, a request for qualifications was issued to identify potential developers for the project. The next steps in the process include the consideration of a land withdrawal resolution by the Huerfano Chapter and a request for proposals from the potential developers.

Navajo Hopi Land Commission Chair Otto Tso said the key to moving the project forward is maintaining communication between all of the stakeholders involved in the development process including the community. Other commission members including Herman Daniels, Jr., Jimmy Yellowhair, Paul Begay, and Elmer P. Begay also spoke in support of the initiative.

President Nez said the Nez-Lizer Administration will continue to work with the stakeholders to ensure the success of the Paragon Bitsi Ranch solar project.

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