



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nmlb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation celebrates the expansion of its largest solar energy project



PHOTO: Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, NTUA officials, SRP partners, and Jonathan Scott of the HGTV show “Property Brothers” during the ground breaking celebration of the Kayenta Solar Facility II in Kayenta, Ariz. on August 23, 2018.

KAYENTA, Ariz. – On Thursday, Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) spoke on behalf of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council at the groundbreaking celebration for the Kayenta Solar Facility II, located approximately five-miles north of the community of Kayenta. The Kayenta Solar Facility II is the second phase to the existing large-scale solar farm.

The existing solar facility operated by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, is located on 300-acres of land, and provides approximately 27.3-megawatts of solar energy. The new addition will provide an additional 28.0 megawatts. When completed, the entire solar facility will produce enough energy for approximately 36,000 homes on the Navajo Nation.

During his keynote address, Delegate Shepherd who also serves as chair of the Resources and Development Committee, commended the NTUA staff and board, the grazing permit holders, and community members and leadership for their collaboration and dedication to expand the first-ever large-scale solar farm on the Navajo Nation.

“In April 2016, we broke ground for the initial solar farm and today we celebrate the expansion. Our traditional and modern knowledge of sustaining and utilizing our natural resources has presented many opportunities of growth and development. The solar farm continues to serve as a model for future renewable energy development,” said Delegate Shepherd. “We extend our appreciation to the families that voluntarily gave their grazing lands to the build the solar farm to invest in the Nation’s future in renewable energy.”

The families of John Todacheene, Bessie Parrish, Jefferson Yazzie Black, Florence Parrish, and the late Ella Todacheene, who each held grazing permits within the area, consented to land withdrawals to allow for the construction of the solar facility.

NTUA general manager Walter W. Haase stated that the solar development increases infrastructure development, creates energy workforce for job opportunities, generates tax dollars and revenues for further infrastructure construction and utilities, increases additional scholarship and internship programs, and creates revenue for the local community.

He added that the success of the first phase resulted in a payout of wages totaling \$5.2 million to Navajo workers that also received over 4,700 hours of solar utility construction training. Additionally, the solar facility generated approximately \$3 million in taxes and we expect to produce similar economic benefits from the solar facility expansion, Haase said.

President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, officials from Kayenta Chapter and Kayenta Township, Salt River Project vice president John Hoopes, Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo regional director Batholomew Stevens, and Jonathan Scott of Property Brothers, Inc. on HGTV were also in attendance at the celebration.

The Kayenta Solar Facility II is expected to begin operation by June 2019.

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