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Eric Descheenie (Navajo County) 928-524-4045
Erny Zah (Navajo Nation) 928-380-0071

NAVAJO NATION PRESIDENT BEN SHELLY, NAVAJO COUNTY CHAIRMAN JONATHAN NEZ, AND RED DOG GRAVEL PROJECT PARTNERS SHOWCASE PROGRESS ON ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

PINON, AZ – Wednesday, inter-governmental partners making up the Red Dog Graveling Project demonstrated progress to Navajo Nation “Black Mesa Region” Chapter leadership and Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly during a team update meeting at the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation/Navajo County Pinon Road Yard Facility.

The Red Dog Gravel Project is a partnership initiative intended to improve the quality of life for Black Mesa Region residents by crushing, hauling, and placing red dog gravel material from Peabody Western Coal Company on 125 miles of road in most need of repair, over five years. Black Mesa region consists of ten Navajo Nation municipalities or chapters including Kayenta, Pinon, Forest Lake, Black Mesa, Shonto, Low Mountain, Chilchinbeto, Whippoorwill, Hardrock, and Blue Gap/Tachee.

The intergovernmental partnership consists of Navajo Nation Department of Transportation (NDOT), Navajo County, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Peabody Western Coal Company, local school districts, in particular Pinon and Kayenta, in addition to the chapters.

The partnership reported to meeting participants that Phase-I of year-one is complete and Phase-II of year-one is well underway. Phase-I included the delivery of 4,500 tons of red dog gravel to each chapter to improve road segments (totaling 25 miles) in most need of repair as identified by chapters.

Phase-II of year-one includes the distribution of 40,000 tons of red dog gravel to the respective ten chapters and placement to locations where chapters designated greatest need. To date, the communities of Low Mountain and Whippoorwill have received their allocated amount with road maintenance vehicles making their way to the next designated chapters. Phase-II is expected to be completed this fall.
As a facilitator to the Red Dog Gravel Project, Navajo County Chairman Jonathan Nez acknowledged the outstanding cooperation and hard work of the partners, “If there is ever a model of true partnership involving virtually all levels of government and the private sector, this is it. The federal government through the BIA, Navajo Nation, Navajo County – State of Arizona, Navajo chapters, and Peabody Western Coal Company are all contributing to this common effort in tremendous ways. Chapters, NDOT, and Navajo County have foot much of the bill for the 40,000 of gravel crushing. Navajo Nation has provided $250,000 for material hauling and placing expenses. BIA Force Account, the construction workforce group in BIA, is contracted to haul material with cost effective material placement. Navajo County has provided two road maintenance equipment operators and water trucks. And NDOT, Navajo County, and Peabody are providing fuel. Even the school districts are allowing construction crew to lodge in their respective housing units. I applaud all of us.”

After reporting on much of the progress the BIA Force Account has made since they started April 8, BIA Construction Manager Joe Peterman stated, “These guys deserve a lot of kudos. They work hard from sun up to sun down and more, and we’re coming to your chapters...be ready! I want to thank the Kayenta Unified School District for providing our guys housing and Navajo County for buying our trucks new tires. Going through 15 tires to date tells you the kind of miles we’re putting in. We greatly appreciate it.”

After receiving the update reports from the project partners, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly offered his remarks, “This group here is pioneering how partnerships work successfully and you all need to share this with other chapters and agencies to learn from. I have directed NDOT to setup trainings and work sessions to share how you made this work to provide safer roads in your communities.”

The Red Dog Gravel Project update concluded with site visits to Navajo Route 4, west of the Pinon community and Navajo Route 67 of the Low Mountain community. Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly, Navajo County Chairman Jonathan M. Nez, NDOT Director Paulson Chaco, Navajo County Public Works Director Homero Vela, Navajo County Transportation Liaison Leo Sheppard, and accompanying staff observed partnership construction crew carrying out Red Dog graveling for the people.

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