



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MEDIA CONTACTS

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

### Kayenta Solar Facility receives support from Navajo Nation Council



*Photo: President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, and Speaker LoRenzo Bates with Navajo Tribal Utility Authority board members and management staff at the site for the Kayenta Solar Facility in Kayenta, Arizona on April 23, 2016.*

**KAYENTA, Ariz.** – On Saturday, members from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council participated in a groundbreaking ceremony at the site for the new Kayenta Solar Facility, which is located approximately five-miles west of the community of Kayenta. The ceremony marked the culmination of years of development and preparation for the first-ever large-scale utility solar farm on the Navajo Nation.

According to the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, the entity entered into a two-year energy and environmental attribute agreement with the Salt River Project to develop the solar farm, which will provide approximately 27.5-megawatt photovoltaic solar energy to the Navajo Nation.

The families of John Todacheene, Bessie Parrish, Jefferson Yazzie Black, and Florence Parrish, who hold grazing permits in the Kayenta chapter district, consented to land withdrawals within their designated grazing areas to allow NTUA and SRP to construct the solar farm.

Speaker of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) expressed gratitude to the families and said that without their cooperation and consent to the land withdrawals, the solar facility would not have been possible.

“I want to thank the families that allowed this project to go forward. In order for any project to be successful, it takes the involvement of the chapter, the residents, and all the officials in the area. This project is an example of that cooperation and coordination, and without that kind of support, a project or initiative struggles to come to fruition,” said Speaker Bates, also noting that renewable energy development remains a priority for the Council and the entire Navajo Nation.

The Kayenta Solar Facility will be constructed on 300-acres of land west of Kayenta. Construction is expected to be complete by the end of 2016.

Resources and Development Committee chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat) pointed out that the groundbreaking ceremony came only a couple days before Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day, signifying the Navajo Nation's independence and strive to be self-sustaining.

“Leadership from the grazing permit holders' families illustrated their understanding of the importance of what this development means, such as jobs and revenue for the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Shepherd. “And above all, we are working towards addressing pressing issues surrounding global warming and renewable green energy.”

Delegate Shepherd added that the Navajo Nation should begin to transition and diversify natural resources from coal and continue to invest in renewable energy initiatives.

Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta), who represents the Kayenta community, commended Kayenta Chapter and NTUA for pushing the project forward, and suggested that jobs be offered to the families that gave up portions of their grazing lands.

“After the facility is constructed and operations begin, the family members who consented to withdraw from their grazing areas should be considered first for jobs at the facility. They selflessly gave permission for this project to happen to help their Navajo people and we need to reciprocate their kindness by providing them with job opportunities,” said Delegate Brown.

NTUA officials said the solar facility would generate over 100 construction jobs and several subcontracting opportunities. Currently, NTUA has four large-scale solar panels located throughout the Navajo Nation in Arizona and New Mexico.

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