



CARES Act funds move water, wifi access projects forward

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer received an update report from Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, indicating that NTUA has connected 223 homes to the electric grid, upgraded 30 water wells, and continues to install up to 150 water cisterns systems, and move forward using CARES Act funds.

NTUA utility crews are working 10-hour days, weekends, and holidays to complete projects. NTUA is planning to extend electricity to 510 families, which includes over 350 families that

were identified during the 2020 LIGHT UP NAVAJO II application process.

In addition, NTUA continues to accept applications from residents for its residential solar program, which was allocated $35.1 million in CARES Act funds.

“NTUA is doing a great job in partnering with the Navajo Nation to expedite the right-of-way processes and other requirements to connect many homes to the electric grid,” Nez said. “We are very grateful to all of the NTUA crews and management for moving quickly to move forward with projects that will provide more electrical power, water resources, and internet access for our communities.

“We are hopeful that our people will have access to electricity and water to help minimize the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are optimistic that NTUA will be able to connect electricity for well over 500 families by the end of the year,” he added.

NTUA was approved to receive $13.8 million for power line projects, $24.7 million to increase overall electric grid capacity, $20.9 million for cisterns systems, $18.6 million for wastewater systems, and $32.8 million for wireless and broadband expansion from the CARES Act funds.

“I commend NTUA for putting together a plan that leverages all of the available resources and CARES Act dollars for the benefit of the Navajo people,” Lizer said. “Their utility crews are spending many hours away from their families to help other families – that’s what we need more of, people helping other people during this pandemic to help us overcome the challenges.

“We look forward to seeing more progress in the weeks and months ahead,” Lizer said.

Among the numerous water projects, NTUA utility crews are in the process of replacing motors and pumps for up to 45 targeted water wells, and working with Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority to install 150 water cisterns systems where there is no water available for household drinking water, and bathroom and kitchen usage.

Other projects include renovations and upgrades of regional water stations, construction of several new watering points, converting off-line-wells to watering loading stations for livestock, water well renovations, replacement of exposed water lines, and more.

NTUA has also established 32 free wifi hotpots in various communities across the Navajo Nation to help students, parents, and teachers with online learning. NTUA and NTUA Choice Wireless are assessing the possibility of installing additional wifi hotspots due to increased demand and usage. NTUA is also awaiting the arrival of new materials and equipment to construct new towers in several communities.

“The families have expressed to our crews their heartfelt gratitude that electricity has finally reached their homes. It is a challenging goal which we will work hard to surpass, because as we are connecting homes, more families are coming forward submitting their applications for electricity,” NTUA General Manager Walter Haase stated.

Overall, the Navajo Nation received over $714 million in CARES Act funds: $600 million on May 6, $86 million on June 16, and $27 million on June 18. Approximately $537 million in CARES Act funds has been approved and signed into law, leaving a remaining amount of $176 million.

For more information about eligibility for the solar program, please visit ntua.com under CARES Act-NTUA Projects.