

Next steps for solar ranch

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission announced that it will explore the next phase of activity, Pre-Construction, at Site 1 of the Paragon-Bisti Solar Ranch comprised of 22,000 acres of the Paragon-Bisti Ranch south of Farmington that was selected and conveyed to the Navajo Nation in the late 1980s under the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974.

Site 1 consists of approximately 1,321-acres adjoining the Bisti Substation on New Mexico State Highway 371, north of De-Na-Zin Wash.

The announcement comes after a work session held in August in which NHLC members received a technical briefing on the Feasibility Study for the Paragon-Bisti Solar Ranch from Tetra Tech - a company hired to perform the study.

The Feasibility Study found that approximately 10,000 acres on five major sites are suitable for hosting 2,100 megawatts of solar photovoltaic power - equal to the entire generating capacity of the state of New Mexico. Site 1 could host as much as 290 megawatts of clean renewable power.

The study was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy's Tribal Energy Program, and was completed on June 30, 2015. The Pre-Construction phase includes meeting and recruiting solar developers, surveying, and environmental assessment.

"The Commissioners appreciate the magnitude of this project and we are thankful for the investment by the U.S. Department of Energy," stated NHLC chair Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii).

Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office executive director Wenona Benally, said the project will set the Nation "on a new path."

"There is extraordinary potential for the Navajo Nation to develop renewable energy resources on our lands," added Benally.

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