



Navajo Nation calls on Western Albuquerque Land Holdings to allow access for critical To'hajiilee-Albuquerque water line project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 12, 2020

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — A critical water access project intended to provide clean piped water to the Navajo community of To'hajiilee is being held up by Western Albuquerque Land Holdings and the Garrett Development Corporation of Arizona. The Navajo Nation Council, local To'hajiilee Chapter government, Navajo community members and Council Delegate Jamie Henio (Alamo, Ramah, To'hajiilee) are seeking immediate relief as critical local water wells are expected to go dry by year's end.

"The Navajo people living in the To'hajiilee community desperately need a long-term, reliable water supply," said Delegate Henio. "Without this important water pipeline project, To'hajiilee's existing water wells will continue to fail after years of 'band-aid' fixes. Five have failed already, and the sixth has less than 11 months until it will also fail."

The To'hajiilee-Albuquerque water pipeline line project was created to support the immediate and long-term water needs of the Navajo people of the To'hajiilee satellite community. The pipeline would connect the remote community to the Albuquerque water supply system, but is being block due to the non-responses of both WALH and the GDCA.

"The Navajo Nation Council has always fully supported the To'hajiilee-Albuquerque water pipeline project, and we have reached out to state and national leaders throughout this process to ensure their support, as well," said 24th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Seth Damon (Baahaali, Chilchiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). "This is the most viable option for a stable source of water for the To'hajiilee community, and we're willing, as Navajo leaders, to work with any partner or private company to make sure it continues to move forward.

The local To'hajiilee Chapter government currently has a feasible plan to bring in fresh water from Albuquerque through a proposed 7.2 mile pipeline. However, that project is being blocked by a WALH and GDCA, which are backed by Barclays Bank.

"Unless these companies give us the opportunity to negotiate access through the property, when the last To'hajiilee community water well fails, Navajo families will have to resort to bringing in water with emergency tanker trucks," stated Delegate Henio.

Senator Martin Heinrich has taken a stance in favor of the project on social media. Sen. Heinrich calling for a solution to help the project move beyond the block by the private development companies.

"I find it unconscionable that Western Albuquerque Land Holdings and Garrett Development Corporation have been unwilling to come to the negotiating table to help the To'hajiilee Chapter secure access to clean water. This is truly a humanitarian crisis and we need a solution immediately," said Senator Heinrich on social media.

During the most recent discussions of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, unanimous support for the project was established through Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CJY-67-20 on Jul. 31. The Council authorized an immediate \$8 million to support the To'hajiilee community's request for clean piped water as a critical measure in supporting public health. That resolution is still pending at the Office of the President and Vice President for enactment.

“We call on the Navajo People and those beyond the Navajo Nation to help us bring these private companies to the table so that the people of the To’hajiilee community can have access to clean water. Time is of the essence,” said Delegate Henio.

###

MEDIA CONTACTS: communications@navajo-nsn.gov (928) 287-2085
Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director
Timothy Benally, Public Information Officer
Isabella S. Robbins, Staff Writer