



THE TRUTH WELL TOLD *Independent*

Thursday January 20, 2021

NTUA to return unspent funds

*\$34M in CARES
money may revert
to hardship fund*

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority recently announced that it will return \$34,051,578 in unspent Navajo Nation CARES Act funds to the Navajo Nation. The funds are expected to be reverted into the Navajo Nation Hardship Fund to help Navajo families.

The announcement says since NTUA was awarded about \$147 million in CARES ACT funds to fund NTUA utility projects last year, the tribal enterprise has focused on completing as many projects before the Navajo Nation's Dec. 30 deadline. While many of them were completed, weather and other challenges prevented the authority from reaching the ultimate goal.

"Unfortunately, time, weather, COVID-19 issues and other variables were not on our side," NTUA General Manager Walter Haase said. "During all this, we heard the public concern regarding Hardship funding; therefore, we believe we should do our part by evaluating all NTUA CARES Act projects on a weekly basis and return unspent funds without question."

NTUA was awarded about \$147 million in CARES ACT funds last year through Navajo Nation Council legislation CJY-67-20 to fund numerous NTUA utility projects. The projects included \$30 million for electric powerline projects and capacity upgrades, \$35 million for PV off grid solar units, \$18 million for water and wastewater projects, \$20 million for water cistern systems, and \$32 million for broadband expansion projects.

NTUA reported the allocation helped connect 719 families on the Navajo Nation to the electric grid. In addition, 300 off-grid residential solar units have been released to vendors for placement at homes and when they are installed, another 1,000 families will receive a power source to light up their homes.

With the funds awarded under CJY-67-20, three telecommunications towers were built, 42 free Wi-Fi hotspots were activated, and 82 internet broadcast stations were completed, according to the announcement.

Repairs and upgrades to six public water-loading stations have been completed, including nine new water loading stations, and five separate water loading stations were completed for water hauling for livestock.

In partnership with the Navajo Engineering Construction Authority, 81 out of the 111 Water Cistern, Septic and power systems were completed. Water line connections and Septic system were installed at 30 homes. Renovations were completed on three major regional water tanks.

The announcement says NTUA is currently working to complete certain projects that were started, but were delayed as a result of COVID-19 issues.