

Navajo Nation Groundbreaking (Video Transcript)

June 2, 2012

Commissioner Connor: We're breaking ground on a major construction project. This is the largest single project that the Bureau of Reclamation is now primarily responsible for. This effort that we start today in breaking ground will last for the next dozen years. This presence will result in significant employment opportunities over that 12 year period for folks in Northwest New Mexico and better yet, it will leave a lasting legacy to the Navajo Nation, to the Jicarilla Apache Nation and the city of Gallup New Mexico.

And I guess I don't need to remind those of you in the audience that there has been a history of unfulfilled promises between the federal government and the tribal nations across this country.

But I am here to tell you today that the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project will not be part of that legacy of unfulfilled promises. It's part of a new history.

It's part of a new history that is being led by President Obama and Secretary Salazar in how we deal with our tribal nations.

It's a history of partnership and support for sovereignty and self determination and we're very proud of that record and we're very proud to epitomize that today.

I'm here with a lot of friends, who have put their whole heart and soul in to making today a reality. I've witnessed during the course of this process, great great leadership at the federal level, state level, local level and of course, tribal leaders.

So today we're going to celebrate the actions of those may people, and of course the promise that this project brings and rest assure, as I mentioned before, I can't help but keep putting in a plug for the Bureau of Reclamation. We recognize that this is a high priority and it will remain so over the next dozen years.

Secretary Salazar: Today we break ground on a new engine for economic growth for this area for Navajo as Chairman said. And for the Jicarilla Apache, for Gallup and for New Mexico. Today we begin construction on 280 miles of pipeline, two water treatment plants and a delivery system that will serve 43 Navajo chapters, the southwest portion of the Jicarilla Apache Nation and the City of Gallup. When completed, the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project will deliver a long-term sustainable water supply.

But I want to speak about just 3 critical factors that really brought us here today to this great celebration. The first is honoring the commitments to Indian nations. The second is our drive to make sure that these litigations around the country, that people say

cannot be resolved; we can show the way that we can in fact resolve them. And the 3rd factor for us is investing in the American infrastructure which is so needed especially in places like Gallup, in Dulce and all the chapters here on the Navajo nation.

This project is a reflection of the president's own personal commitment and direction that, we invest in these kinds of infrastructure projects; bring economic growth to our communities.