NAVAJO-GALLUP WATER SUPPLY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025

MEETINGS

Project Construction Committee (PCC)
Apr. 30, 2026 9 a.m. - noon

Location: Navajo Tribal Utility Authority - Corporate Headquarters
Indian Route 12
Fort Defiance, AZ 86504

To participate virtually, please contact jacree@usbr.gov

GET IN TOUCH

Questions/Comments:
Becky Begay
Navajo Outreach Coordinator
Ph. 505.408.8516
bbegay@usbr.gov

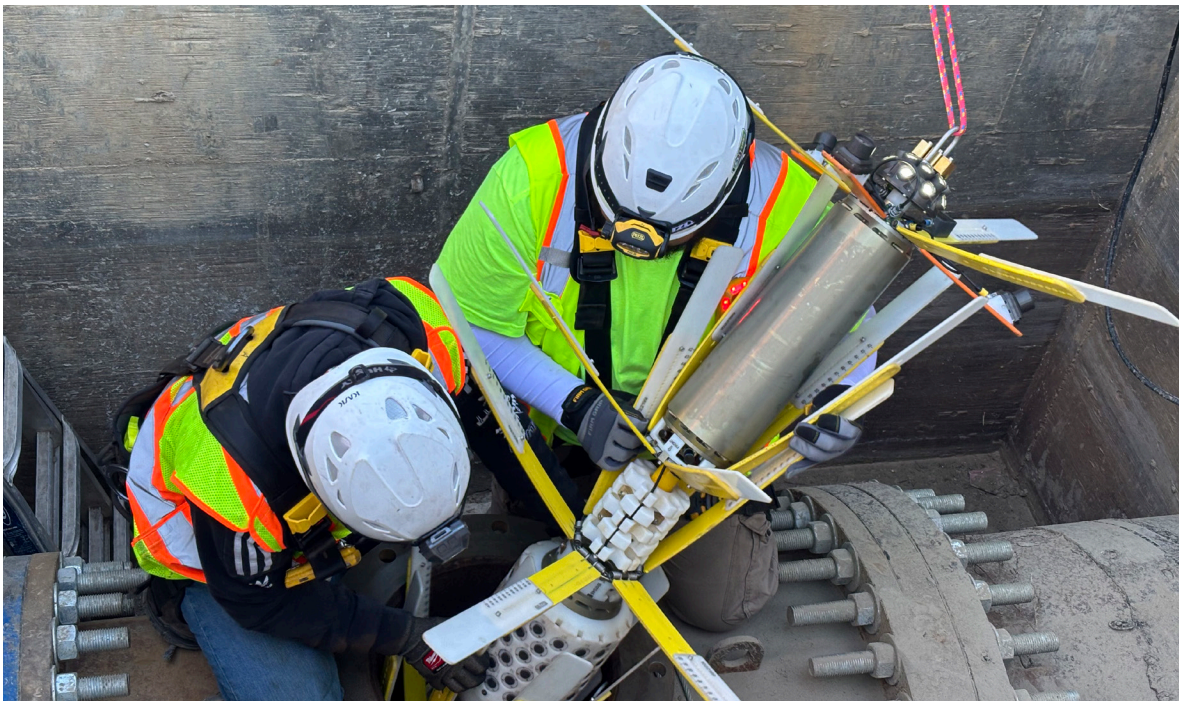
Contact us:
Bureau of Reclamation
Four Corners Construction Office
Ph. 505.324.5000
1235 La Plata Highway
Farmington, NM 87401

Reach 1 Renewal: Upgrading a Critical Pipeline

By Reclamation Civil Engineers Malcolm Begay, Hilda Castillo-Smith, and Paul Bergstrom

In April 2023, the Bureau of Reclamation purchased an existing 42-inch ductile iron pipe from PNM (formally, the Public Service Company of New Mexico) to be re-designated as the Reach 1 pipeline for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project (NGWSP). The pipeline was originally installed by PNM about 13 years ago as part of the infrastructure to supply cooling water to the San Juan Generating Station.

Continued on page 2



Pipe diver tool being lowered to crew for insertion into Reach 1 pipeline for inspection. Reclamation photo

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

If you would like to learn more, visit our website at:
https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/navajo-gallup/

Reach 1 cont.

Cut pipe in preparation for pipe cleaning and camera inspection. This is the location of the "T" for the temporary bypass tank. Reclamation photo

The pipeline remains in good working condition and will be upgraded to meet NGWSP standards, supporting long-term, dependable operation for the communities it serves.

The 4.8-mile pipeline carries water from the San Juan River intake pumping plant to the Frank Chee Willetto Reservoir. It features a cathodic protection system to prevent corrosion of the ductile iron pipe, air release valves for smooth water flow, and blowoff valves to drain the pipeline for maintenance. The Reach 1 pipe, along with the intake pumping plant and reservoir, increases the NGWSP's reliability.

Continued on Page 3

WCA crews exposing Reach 1 to prepare for pipe cleaning and inspection. Reclamation photo

FACES OF NGWSP

MEET RICHARD BEGAY

Richard Begay is born to the To'ahani and born for the Tabaahi. His maternal grandfathers are the Kinyaa'aani and paternal grandfathers are the Tachiinii. He is from Naschitti, New Mexico.

Richard has been working as the Department Manager for the Navajo Nation Heritage and Historic Preservation Department since February 2017 and oversees the cultural resources compliance for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. He works with Navajo communities, Navajo Nation departments and programs, and with federal and state partners to oversee and manage the Navajo Nation's vast inventory of cultural resources across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

Continued on Page 4

Reach 1 cont.

The reservoir allows sediment to settle before the water reaches the San Juan Lateral Water Treatment Plant, ensuring a clean water supply and providing off-river storage if the intake shuts down due to high sediment levels in the river.

By repurposing the existing pipeline instead of constructing a new one, Reclamation shortened the overall project schedule and avoided larger impacts that would have required more extensive cultural, environmental, and right-of-way reviews typically required for new construction—reducing project timelines and costs. In June 2025, Reclamation awarded a $9.7 million contract to WCA Construction, LLC to rehabilitate the pipeline.

Major components of the construction project include:

- **Inspecting pipe condition.**
- **Installing new manholes.**
- **Rehabbing the combination air valves and blow off valves.**
- **Repairing pipe joints, water leaks, and inner coating.**
- **Installing a new standpipe, plunger valve, and flap gate.**

The contractor is now on site inspecting the pipeline with video and acoustic equipment to check its condition, locate any leaks, and has started installing new manholes.

Construction is expected to be completed in summer 2026.

WCA crews assemble trench boxes ready for install. Reclamation photo

Reach 1 pipeline water discharge location into reservoir (this duckbill valve will be replaced with a flap gate). Reclamation photo

Contract awarded for San Jaun Lateral Pumping Plant No. 1

The plant will be a critical feature of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project

By Jenny Erickson, Upper Colorado Basin Region Public Affairs

FARMINGTON, N.M. — The Bureau of Reclamation recently announced a nearly $62 million contract award to Ames Federal Contracting Group, LLC for the construction of the San Juan Lateral Pumping Plant No. 1. The plant is a critical component of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

"This contract continues decades of collaboration between Reclamation, the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the City of Gallup, and the State of New Mexico to treat and deliver safe and reliable drinking water to rural Navajo and Jicarilla Apache communities and City of Gallup residents in northwest New Mexico and east-central Arizona," said Reclamation's Four Corners Construction Office Construction Engineer/Manager Bart Deming. "Throughout our time working with our Project partners, we have seen firsthand the many ways this clean, reliable water source continues to improve the lives of residents and provide opportunities for economic development and job creation, which would not otherwise be available."

The San Juan Lateral raw water system will convey untreated water from the San Juan River to the San Juan Lateral Water Treatment Plant, where it will be treated to safe drinking standards. The system includes two pumping plants, a reservoir, and associated pipelines.

Once completed, along with these other components of the San Juan Lateral's raw water system, the plant will deliver San Juan River water stored at the Frank Chee Willetto Reservoir to the treatment facility via the planned Reach 2 and Reach 3 pipelines. From there the raw water will be treated and pumped south along the San Juan Lateral, allowing for vital drinking water to be delivered to Navajo communities in northwest New Mexico; Gallup, New Mexico; and Window Rock, Arizona. The pumping plant's construction is being funded entirely by the Reclamation Water Settlement Fund authorized under Public Law 111-11 to supplement Congressional appropriations necessary to complete the Project. The pumping plant will be one of the largest on the NGWSP, matching the River Intake Pumping Plant, with a peak capacity of 71 cubic feet per second, which would equate to being able to fill the volume of an Olympic size swimming pool in just over 20 minutes.

Faces of NGWSP cont.

Richard says he wholeheartedly supports the NGWSP because it will deliver water to many Navajo homes. He strongly believes that potable water is something most Americans take for granted, and the Navajo people should not have to haul water or drink substandard water within the 21st century.

Previously, Richard received his B.A. in Anthropology from Dartmouth College and a master's in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He worked on the Navajo reservation in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah as a field archaeologist and later as an ethnologist for various projects. He has worked directly with traditional native elders documenting oral histories, sacred places, and other resources and we are so pleased to have him working alongside Reclamation on the NGWSP.

Four Corners Construction Office employees win Reclamation Regional Annual Awards for the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Colorado Basin Region

By Jenny Erickson, Upper Colorado Basin Region Public Affairs

This year's Regional Engineer of the Year and Regional Project Manager of the Year awards reflect the breadth of Reclamation's mission –leading complex, multi-region modernization efforts that serve communities and national priorities.

"It is an immense honor to have two of our employees, Malcom Begay and Shannon Hatch, recognized across the Upper Colorado Basin Region for their accomplishments," said Four Corners Construction Office Construction Engineer/Manager Bart Deming. "Their dedication, innovation, and remarkable leadership have not only driven the success of critical projects but have also set a benchmark for excellence within our office and beyond. They are exceptional performers, truly outstanding professionals, who exemplify the spirit of Reclamation's mission. We are very fortunate to have them on our team."

2026 Regional Engineer of the Year

Malcolm M. Begay

Four Corners Construction Office Engineer Malcom Begay was named Reclamation's Upper Colorado Basin Region's Engineer of the Year. This award recognizes his outstanding contributions to engineering demonstrated by his leadership, innovation, and technical expertise on the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

As the sole civil engineer in the Design and Commissioning Group at the Four Corners Construction Office, Begay ensured continued progress on the NGWSP. His leadership advanced major components of the project, including Pumping Plant 1, Block 2-3 pipelines, the River Intake Pumping Plant, and the Reach 21 DZ Booster Tank. Begay also led design data collection for the Frank Chee Willetto Reservoir and San Juan Lateral turnout buildings. His strategic thinking and collaborative approach have been vital to keeping the NGWSP on track to meet its Congressional deadline.

2025 Project Manager of the Year

Shannon Hatch

Four Corners Construction Office Project Manager Shannon Hatch was named Reclamation's Upper Colorado Basin Region's Project Manager of the Year. This award recognizes her exceptional leadership in managing over $200 million in Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project features. Hatch's work on pumping plants, pipelines, and the Frank Chee Willetto Reservoir has been vital to advancing this $2.2 billion project and directly supports the delivery of safe, reliable drinking water to the Navajo Nation, Jicarilla Apache Nation, and City of Gallup. Hatch consistently navigated complex challenges while keeping teams aligned and milestones on track and her dedication and expertise exemplify the highest standards of public service.

Congratulations to Malcom and Shannon!

Celebrating Culture at the Window Rock Fair-A Personal Reflection on Tradition, Community, and Connection to Reclamation's Mission

By Norleen Poyer-Begay, USBR-Records Information Management Specialist

The Window Rock Fair is one of the Navajo Nation's most cherished celebrations. Despite its growth, it now has over 100,000 attendees, it remains rooted in its mission to honor Dine' culture, and it unites communities across the Four Corners region. At the fair, Navajo Nation community members get to enjoy the carnival, rodeo, pow wow, Dine' song and dance, Miss Navajo pageant and more.

The Bureau of Reclamation's Four Corners Construction Office hosts a booth each year at the fair to share information about the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project with community members. Representatives from the office are available to answer questions about the project and explain construction progress. This is a great opportunity for Reclamation to interact with people who are receiving project water, as well as to gain a better understanding of the Navajo culture and our traditions. Our representatives work the booth in shifts and when we aren't providing information there, we are able to enjoy and learn from the other booths, activities and events at the fair.

Norleen Begay ready to greet visitors at the Fair. Reclamation photo

At the Window Rock Fair, attendees learn about the NGWSP at the Four Corners Construction Office booth. Norleen Begay greets visitors and provides information about the project. Reclamation photo

One of the most memorable experiences I had this past year was attending the Miss Navajo Nation Pageant, a cornerstone event of the fair. This pageant is unlike any other-it is not based on appearance, but on cultural knowledge, language fluency, and traditional skills. One of the most respected and challenging parts of the competition is the sheep butchering contest. No other pageant throughout the U.S. requires butchering a sheep. It begins before sunrise, as contestants gather wood, build a fire, and prepare their space. Each contestant is given a live sheep and must demonstrate their ability to butcher it using traditional methods. They are evaluated not only by their physical skill but also on their cultural knowledge.

Continued on Page 7

Celebrating Culture at the Window Rock Fair cont.

Judges ask questions like, "Where did you learn how to butcher?" and "What does this process mean to you?"

To me, this is one of the most powerful and meaningful parts of the fair. Sheep are sacred to our Diné people—they are a source of nourishment, healing, and spiritual connection. Our elders often remind us that feeding our inner soul with traditional food like mutton helps us feel whole again. It gives us strength to face life's challenges. Watching the contestants share their stories and demonstrate their upbringing around sheep is both emotional and inspiring.

I encourage everyone to witness this event at least once. Arrive early—by 6 a.m.—and come prepared: bring a comfortable chair, an umbrella, a warm jacket for the morning chill, and wear your best traditional outfit with turquoise jewelry. Embrace the atmosphere, enjoy traditional Navajo food, and take in the beauty of our people and culture. Events like this remind us why it's so important to pass down our traditions to the next generation—to keep our identity strong and unified.

As part of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, Reclamation is working to bring long-term, reliable water to Navajo communities. Attending cultural events like the Window Rock Fair helps us better understand the people we serve and strengthens our commitment to supporting the health, traditions, and future of the Diné Nation.

Water Talk

Did you read about the 4.8-mile pipeline that carries water from the San Juan River to the Frank Chee Willetto Reservoir and have some questions about the terminology? Hopefully this helps!

Impressed Current Cathodic Protection System: A corrosion prevention technique used to protect metal structures buried in soil or submerged in water. These systems stop corrosion before it begins to ensure the safety and integrity of the steel pipelines. It works by using a small electrical current to interfere with the chemical process that causes rust. By directing electricity toward the pipe, the system creates a protective barrier that prevents the metal from breaking down, even when surrounded by wet soil.

Air release valve: An air release valve is a mechanical device used in piping systems to automatically release trapped air. It is commonly found in water pipelines, wastewater systems, and pressurized tanks. As water travels through a pipe, air bubbles form which collect at high points. When enough of these air bubbles collect, they create large air pockets that can cause flow restrictions, pressure surges, and potential damage from the air accumulation. By releasing this air at high points, it improves system efficiency and protects equipment. These valves are also essential for filling a pipe with liquid, such as drinking water, to allow for air to escape as it is replaced with the water.

Blowoff valve: A blowoff valve Is a valve typically installed at strategic locations along a pipeline, generally seen at low points along the system for the purpose of draining and flushing the system. Proper location of these valves simplifies maintenance of the system to ensure all areas of the pipe can be drained for various purposes, such as repair or replacement of equipment.

These pipeline features can be found throughout the NGWSP to safely and efficiently deliver clean and reliable drinking water.