

Rural Utilities Service • Water and Environment Program

Largest RD wastewater project in New Mexico obligated

Shiprock, New Mexico located in northwest New Mexico gets its name from the volcanic mountain that rises 1,600 feet above the ground just west of the community. The town sits in the middle of the Navajo Nation and is made up of 8,300 individuals.

In the next several years Shiprock will see the completion of a new wastewater delivery and treatment plant. The \$26,045,315 in funding for the project comes from the Water and Environment Program (WEP) making this project the largest ever funded by Rural Development in New Mexico.

The much-needed wastewater system has been in the works for the last several years because the old sewer system was outdated and needed replacement.

“It all came together earlier this summer,” says loan specialist Thelma DiBartolomeo, “One of the obstacles was underwriting the preliminary engineering report (PER). We had to make sure it was written as one large project. Once that was done the application went through.” DiBartolomeo worked closely with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) to get all the paperwork and information necessary for the application and then get NTUA to agree to the loan/grant package.

“This was a total team effort,” says DiBartolomeo. She added, “We have a good working relationship with NTUA and our engineer Robert Garcia made this project a priority making sure every item in the PER was correct to insure the application was approved in a timely basis.”

The new wastewater system was needed because the old system exceeded Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) standards with higher rates of effluent going into the San Juan River over 20 times within a 24-month period from 2016 to 2017. The discharge with the high levels of nitrates could cause health issues for those living downstream.

When asked about the accomplishment to get this project approved DiBartolomeo said, “It feels good to know that we are helping the residents of Shiprock, but I believe the relationship created with NTUA will hopefully lead to other projects in the future.”



Downtown Shiprock, NM faces the rock formation known as the “Shiprock” which rises almost 1,600 feet. In the Navajo language the mountain is known as, “Tsé Bit’a’i, “rock with wings” or “winged rock”.

Obligation Amount:	\$20,795,000 loan, \$5,250,315 grant, total \$26,045,315
Date of Obligation:	8/28/2018
Congressional District:	Representative Lujan, District 3; Senators Udall and Heinrich
Partners:	Navajo Tribal Utility Authority
Demographics:	8,300 residents with 33.7 % living in poverty
Impact:	6,000 of the 8,300 residents of Shiprock are connected to sewer service. The rest rely on cesspools and septic systems. The new wastewater system will eliminate pollution issues from these systems and from the old wastewater treatment plant
