



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida Cooperative WREC Brings Power—and Families—to Navajo Nation

June 6, 2025 – In a powerful demonstration of service beyond borders, Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative (WREC) has become the first electric cooperative from Florida to participate in the national “Light Up Navajo” initiative—an effort to bring electricity to homes in the Navajo Nation that have never had power.

In May, a team of 16 WREC employees traveled over 1,800 miles to remote communities in Arizona and New Mexico, where they spent two weeks installing electrical infrastructure in some of the most rugged and isolated terrain in the country. Their mission: to bring light, power, and hope to families who have lived without electricity for generations—and to help bring the next generation home.

“This wasn’t just about electricity. It was about connection, purpose, and impact,” said Jamen Monbarren, District Manager of WREC’s Crystal River office and team leader. “We were honored to be part of something so meaningful.”

The Navajo Nation spans more than 27,000 square miles across Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico and is home to nearly 10,400 families still living without access to electricity. For many, the lack of power has forced younger generations to move away in search of basic necessities and opportunities.

WREC’s team partnered with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) to take on one of the most challenging projects in the region—a project located on a rocky mountain ridge in Sheep Springs, New Mexico. Originally slated for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with a projected three-week timeline, dozens of personnel, and specialized equipment. The WREC crew completed the job in just eight days!

Despite having only one bucket truck, a digger derrick, and a pressure digger, the team successfully built 6.5 miles of power lines up a steep mountain face, spanning several thousand feet in elevation.

“There were doubters,” said one crew member. “But when we heard that some families had been waiting since the 1960s for power, that was all the motivation we needed.”

The work energized 10 homesteads, each serving families of 5 to 10 people—each one representing a life forever changed. For the first time, residents could turn on lights, refrigerate food, charge phones, and power medical equipment. Children could study after dark. Elders could live more safely and comfortably.

But the impact went far beyond the light switch.

One of the most emotional moments came when power was turned on at the home of Brian Morgan. Brian's father, a longtime resident of the area, teared up as he watched the lights come on—knowing it meant his son and grandchildren would finally be moving home.

“Thank you,” he said. “You made everything possible that wasn't possible before electricity.”

He shared how proud he was that his family would no longer have to endure the hardships he faced growing up without power. “I'm just happy my son and grandchildren are coming back. I look forward to all the time and memories we'll build now that they're home.”

“The most important statistic is that we did it safely,” said Monbarren. “And we did it with heart. Our team showed professionalism, humility, and deep respect for the people we served.”

The experience left a lasting impression on both the WREC team and the community they helped.

“Our crews continue to prove they are among the best in the country,” said Gary Steele, Manager of Member Relations. “They represented our Cooperative, our Members, and their families with pride and compassion. This memory will last a lifetime—for us and for the families we helped.”

WREC General Manager David Lambert echoed that sentiment:

“We are privileged to contribute to the transformation of lives in the Navajo Nation. Access to electricity is a fundamental necessity, and we are committed to ensuring these communities receive the power they deserve.”

The “Light Up Navajo” initiative is a collaborative effort between NTUA and electric cooperatives across the U.S., aimed at addressing energy poverty in one of the most underserved regions in the country. WREC's participation marks a milestone for Florida and sets a powerful example of what's possible when service knows no boundaries.

“This project reminded us why we do what we do,” said Monbarren. “We don't just light up homes—we light up lives.”

Check our incredible linemen's journey to the Navajo Nation that was featured on ABC Action News - [Florida lineman bring electricity to Navajo Nation in New Mexico and Arizona](#)

For more information on WREC's journey in the Navajo Nation, please visit WREC's Facebook page. More photos and video available upon request.

About Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WREC):

Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a not-for-profit electric cooperative serving over 270,000 homes and businesses in Pasco, Hernando, Citrus, Polk, and Sumter counties. WREC is dedicated to providing safe and resilient energy and services at the best possible value to its Members while actively contributing to the communities it serves.

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