



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative Helps Bring Power to Navajo Nation Through Light Up Navajo 7

Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative (WREC) has once again extended its commitment to service beyond its Florida communities by participating in Light Up Navajo 7, a national initiative dedicated to bringing electricity to families across the Navajo Nation who have lived without it for generations.

A team of 18 WREC employees traveled more than 1,800 miles to some of the most remote and rugged areas of the Navajo Nation. In just two weeks, the crew successfully energized 18 homes, marking the highest number completed in the history of the Light Up Navajo Project. Many of these homes also lack access to running water, underscoring the profound impact of the work.

The terrain proved especially challenging, with crews sometimes spending five or more hours digging a single hole through unforgiving rock. Despite the demanding conditions, the team remained focused on the mission.

“The terrain and conditions pushed us every single day, but giving up was never an option,” said Ricky Gude, District Manager at WREC’s One Pasco office and team lead. “Seeing the impact firsthand—the smiles, the tears, the gratitude from families experiencing power for the first time—is something that stays with you forever. It reminds you just how meaningful this work truly is. I am also incredibly thankful to our Board of Trustees and to Mr. Lambert for supporting this initiative and making it possible for our team to be here.”

Among those receiving power was Mr. Grass, an 86-year-old resident who had never before had electricity in his home. After spending years on a waiting list alongside more than 9,400 other families, he finally experienced power for the first time—an emotional milestone that reflects the reality for many across the Navajo Nation.

This year’s effort was the largest in the program’s history, with 53 electric utilities from across the country joining forces to address energy poverty in one of the most underserved regions in the United States.

WREC General Manager David Lambert, along with seven members of the cooperative's Board of Trustees, traveled to the Navajo Nation to witness the life-changing work firsthand.

"Watching someone's home come to life with electricity for the very first time is an experience you never forget," Lambert said. "No one in our country should have to live without basic necessities like electricity or running water. I am incredibly proud of the employees who took part in this effort, and deeply thankful for the friends and family members who supported them while they were away. Their sacrifice and encouragement made this mission possible."

WREC's participation represented the cooperative spirit at its core—people helping people. The team included Journeymen Linemen from Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus counties, reflecting the full breadth of WREC's service area.

"Our WREC team was made up of Journeymen Linemen from each of our district offices—Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus counties," said Gary Steele, Manager of Member Relations. "From the moment they arrived, their goal was to represent our communities with pride. They wanted the people of the Navajo Nation to know that there are truly good-hearted, caring people in Florida. More than that, they hoped to build a common link between our communities—a connection rooted in respect, compassion, and the shared belief that everyone deserves access to something as essential as electricity."

For families across the Navajo Nation, electricity means far more than convenience. It brings safety, food security, educational opportunity, and a better quality of life.

"This initiative is about more than building power lines," Gude added. "It's about changing lives."

Through efforts like Light Up Navajo, WREC continues to demonstrate that the cooperative spirit knows no boundaries—proving that compassion, determination, and community can bring light to even the most remote places.

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

Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a not-for-profit electric cooperative serving over 281,000 homes and businesses in Pasco, Hernando, Citrus, Polk, and Sumter counties since 1947. 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.

WREC Media Contact: [Gary Steele \(WREC Manager of Member Relations\)](#)

352-437-2687- Media Line Only [Not For Publication](#)

Pictured below are the 18 WREC employees who volunteered for Light Up Navajo 7.

Ryan Valade (WH), Brandon Krauter (BP), Jesse Diaz (WH), Mike Mylnarski (BP), Bowman Archibald (Trilby), Cole Morgan (CR), Brett Towns (OPC), Sam Horner (CR), Virgil Cook (WH), Stephanie Wilson (GO), Dyllon Leab (OPC), Brian Allen (Trilby), Jay Blommel (OPC), Jamen Monbarren (CR), Ricky Gude (OPC), Matt Platt (GO), Kevin Hays (OPC), and Gary Steele (GO).





Pictured below are WREC General Manager, David Lambert, WREC Board of Trustees, the 18 WREC employees along with NTUA at the celebration dinner.









