



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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A Lifeline and Lasting Gift

Tri-State Generation & Transmission Invests in Region's Future

Prewitt, N.M. – Yesterday, Tri-State Generation & Transmission (Tri-State) issued a press release outlining their investments to support the community with economic transition in light of the closure of the Escalante Generating Station. First and foremost, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG) would like to showcase its appreciation and highlight how these investments aim to provide an opportunity and on-ramp for new industry, base employers, and quality jobs. It is not reported very often that a company goes beyond what is required and even what is responsible – to the point that you would say that they truly care about the people, its place, and the legacy left behind.

"We appreciate Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association for being a pillar of the community for close to 40 years. Many of my relatives and neighbors have benefitted from their employment at Escalante Generating Station, and while we are sad to see it go, know that it has made an impact in many lives and families. This generous donation to our area will cement Tri-State's legacy and provide a foundation for our future. -- Billy Moore, Chairman of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

The powerplant built by Plains Electric Generation and Transmission went operational in 1984. At that time, our region was deep in the throes of the bust of the uranium industry, and this economic anchor was a welcomed addition. This powerplant provided a mine-to-mouth market for nearby coal mines, produced affordable power for the region, and its waste stream would eventually propel McKinley Paper to produce the recycled cardboard that many of us are still cleaning up from Christmas. For nearly 40 years, this cluster of businesses has provided paychecks, taxes, and opportunities to work for both Cibola and McKinley County. Again, our region finds itself in period of economic decline with the potential of a new wave of energy production on the horizon.

This investment gives the community a chance to shape our own future and to position our region for jobs and prosperity that will perpetuate for generations. Many communities around the country are struggling with economic disruptions and global energy market changes that they have no control over but effect their ability to put food on the table and remain in the communities they are rooted.

The goal is simple – provide working people opportunities to make a living and take care of their families while sustaining a tax base for critical services like schools, public safety, and infrastructure. The plans have been in the works for several years, strategies are in place and the targets are set, now it just takes partnership, timing, and hard work to see it through.

The COG believes that the collective investments that Tri-State provided should work hand-in-glove to provide a regional, local, and site-specific approach that covers immediate, short-term, and long-term investment needs of the area. For example:

- **Local Economic Development Organizations**, who have traditionally been under resourced in comparison to their counterparts, will likely focus on workforce development strategies, capacity building, and short-term, criteria-based investment that leverages other private and public funds to act as a development fund to attract companies to locate into the bi-county area.
- **Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments** will utilize funds to provide foundational support, strengthen its regional efforts, and provide regional investments that help with implementing economic transition strategies.
- **Electric Generating Facility Economic District and Authority** will steward longer-term investment, lead on asset repurposing, and focus on driving development of the Prewitt Opportunity Zone.

The COG was completely caught off guard and taken aback to receive \$250,000. We typically put our hands in and not out and advocate from the background on behalf of others, so this truly is a surprise. Our stance has been to support the two counties that are losing the tax base as they are facing the double whammy of economic collapse coupled with the untallied tolls of the COVID-19 pandemic. And we have also supported our local economic development organizations in mobilizing action as they are challenged to perform retention, re-purposing, recruitment, and recovery all at the same time.

The COG will finalize a plan with our Board of Directors on January 20, 2021, but some critical pieces are:

- Provide a required match to pull down \$120,000 in New Mexico Department of Transportation grant funds to complete the Prewitt-Milan Transportation Master Plan to build on our transportation, mobility, and logistics assets, and identify transportation improvements needed to attract and accommodate growth.
- Continued project support for designing and building-out the national awarded and internationally known Prewitt Industrial Park as well as readying other shovel-ready sites in our region.
- Standing up several programs that provide regional tools and resources for economic development and community capacity-building including a revolving loan fund, Americorps*VISTA program, and bolster other COVID-19 Economic Recovery programs in development.

The COG applauds both the Obama and Trump Administrations, our partner US Economic Development Administration, and its Regional Director Jorge Ayala as they have provided over \$6M in investments through their Assistance to Coal Communities and other programs in the last five years. Also, the COG appreciates Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, our Legislative Delegation, and several State agencies for mobilizing about \$13M in direct appropriations including \$5M in local economic development act support to keep McKinley Paper operational, retain its 100 employees, and focus on growing its future in Prewitt, New Mexico.

As a regional agency, our organizing principle is to bring the region together in the belief that what is good for one is good for all. We believe that we are stronger together and only united can we transform our economy from boom-bust to robust.

About Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (NWNMCOG) is 50-year-old regional development organization (RDO) recognized and empowered by the State of New Mexico and the US Economic Development Administration. We serve the entire three-county region of Cibola, McKinley, and San Juan counties and the communities therewithin to improve community and economy for the region and its people. The NWNMCOG is association of nine local governments governed by a Board of Directors unified by the belief that we are stronger together and only united can we advance on regional opportunities and tackle regional challenges from sustainable water supply, to behavior health, to strategic infrastructure, and to regional economic development. For more information about NWNMCOG, visit www.nwnmcog.com.

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