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THE UTE INDIAN TRIBE TAKES MEASURES TO IMPROVE ITS EXISTING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE ON TRIBAL LANDS

FORT DUCHESNE, UT (April 21, 2021) — The Ute Indian Tribe (Tribe) of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation has developed a comprehensive Water Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Development Plan to identify and address the critical needs of the Tribe’s existing water supply and distribution system. The plan outlines the current conditions of the Ute Tribe Water System (UTWS), which presently provides water to over 3,000 users and over 900 homes on the reservation. UTWS infrastructure includes spring collection systems, water treatment facilities, water storage tanks, and a water distribution system.

The Tribe’s plan recognizes that parts of the UTWS is aging and needs improvements to ensure the continuous access of clean drinking water to tribal members and others on the reservation. Approximately 400 homes on the reservation have a service connection that is made of copper, lead, or galvanized pipe with lead solder fittings. The plan identifies the need to replace this existing infrastructure, much of which was installed over 40 years ago. Since 1981, the UTWS staff has replaced approximately 14 miles of asbestos-cement pipelines and reinforced concrete pipelines.

In addition to replacing these remaining water pipelines, the plan identifies the need for increasing water storage capacity and rehabilitating water treatment facilities. The plan will help guide the Tribe and UTWS staff in repairing existing infrastructure or building new infrastructure in a timely manner to mitigate the risks posed by the current system.

The delivery of safe drinking water to tribal members is a critical priority for the Tribe, which acknowledges the vital need for infrastructure upgrades to ensure that UTWS can continue to provide clean drinking water to tribal members and others on the reservation. The Tribe has already taken action to implement the water infrastructure plan by conducting feasibility studies and working with members of Congress to secure funding for these critical needs to ensure expeditious repairs and improvements.

In addition to the implementation of the plan, the Tribe is also developing a water delivery project in the Farm Creek Loop Road area, located north of the Whiterocks community in Uintah County, Utah. Phase 1 of the Farm Creek Loop Road Project was completed in late 2020, which consisted primarily of conducting feasibility studies in the area to identify groundwater well sites. Phases 2 and 3 will entail the installation and testing of the groundwater wells. Finally, Phase 4 involves the investigation and application for funding opportunities for project design and construction. The project is phased because the results and findings from each phase will substantially influence the scope and costs of the succeeding phases.

The Tribe is presently in Phase 2 and has identified a subcontractor to begin drilling the identified groundwater wells. Once the subcontractor secures the necessary permits from the Tribe, well drilling and well testing will commence immediately. The project will increase the

overall quantity of water in the Uintah County area, providing greater water access to Tribal members on the Reservation.

The Ute Indian Tribe recognizes the value of water on the reservation and practices careful and thoughtful management of water resources that are used for drinking, cooking, irrigation, commercial, industrial, recreation, and other uses to sustain life. Both the water infrastructure plan and the Farm Creek Loop Road water delivery project represent steps by the Tribe to improve the quality and quantity of water on the reservation for the benefit of tribal members.

About the Ute Indian Tribe The Ute Indian Tribe resides on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in northeastern Utah. Three bands of Utes comprise the Ute Indian Tribe: the Whiteriver Band, the Uncompahgre Band, and the Uintah Band. The Tribe has a membership of more than three thousand individuals, with over half living on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. The Ute Indian Tribe operates its own tribal government and oversees significant oil and gas deposits on its 4.5-million-acre Reservation. The Tribal Business Committee is the governing council of the Tribe.