



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson today announced the award of two contracts totaling about \$5 million for the grading and draining of a total of nearly 40 miles of road on the Navajo Indian Reservation in both Arizona and New Mexico. The Navajo Reservation, approximately the size of the State of West Virginia, is in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.

The contract for the longest stretch to be graded and drained under one of these two contracts -- 22.3 miles beginning at Pueblo Pintado, N. M. and running southeast to the McKinley-Sandoval County Line four miles west of Torreon, N. M. -- has been let to Owl Constructors of Compton, Calif. for about \$2.5 million.

The contract for the shortest stretch 16.25 miles that will link the Navajo Indian communities of Rough Rock and Chilchinbeto, Apache County, Ariz. with Many Farms, Ariz. -- has been let to Nielsons, Inc., Dolores, Colo. also for about \$2.5 million.

Thompson indicated that the Bureau hopes to let contracts for bituminous surfacing of these two stretches of road in the next fiscal year.

"The 22 mile New Mexico roadway is the last stretch of the 100-mile BIA Route N9 project," Commissioner Thompson explained. "When completed, this 100 mile stretch of road will be an all-weather highway from U. S. 666, 15.5 miles north of Gallup, N. M., across the eastern part of the Navajo Reservation to Torreon, N.M. via Crownpoint and Pueblo Pintado. There it will connect with another surfaced road which goes into Cuba, N. M." It also ties in with New Mexico State Highway 44.

The eastern part of the Navajo Reservation has been dependent upon a dirt BIA Route N9. Work began on the 100 mile project April 1963 with the grading and draining of a stretch of road from U. S. 666 to Coyote Canyon.

The contract to grade and drain the road between Many Farms and Rough Rock calls for work to begin at Arizona State Highway No. 63 at Many Farms and extend westerly 13.5 miles toward Rough Rock. What is termed "Rough Rock Spur" will then be built southwesterly nearly 2.4 miles into Rough -Rock Community and then, near the Rough Rock Mutual Help Housing Site turn northwesterly .31 mile to the new Rough Rock High School.

"When completed, the Many Farms - Rough Rock road will be the main route to what have been the isolated communities of Rough Rock." Commissioner Thompson indicated. "It will serve the Navajo Indians and the general public traveling to and from various kinds of work. It will also provide access to medical facilities and serve as a school bus route. In addition, it will provide better access to nearby recreational areas."

The area the road will serve has been something of a Federal educational center. Many Farms BIA boarding high school was the home of the Navajo Community College which has received considerable Federal funding prior to its move to Tsaile, near Window Rock, Ariz. The high school, plus the BIA

elementary boarding school at Many Farms has a combined enrollment of nearly 1,000. Rough Rock Demonstration School enrolls about 400 students in an educational program under contract by BIA to the Navajo Tribe through which young Navajo are taught elements of the main American culture in conjunction with elements of the unique Navajo culture.

"Projects such as these will help Indian reservations catch up with the rest of the country, " Thompson pointed out. "No local roads were built on Indian reservations from 1900 to 1935, at a time when the rest of the country was being knit together through a paved road system."

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