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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 27, 2026

Broadband resiliency project to begin in Lincoln County

Locations hit by wildfires and floods will be protected

ALBUQUERQUE – A broadband project designed to keep communities connected during environmental disasters in Ruidoso and surrounding Lincoln County begins construction this week.

Peñasco Valley Telephone Cooperative (PVT), based in Artesia, will use a $1 million disaster relief grant from the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion's (OBAE) Connectivity to Declared Disaster Areas Grants program with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). PVT is using the grant to build resilient broadband infrastructure in areas impacted by wildfires and flooding.

"After the 2024 wildfires that destroyed broadband infrastructure in Lincoln County, we dedicated funds to help communities struck by such environmental disasters," said **OBAE Director Jeff Lopez**. "New Mexico must prepare for longer drought and more extreme fires, so it is critical that communities and first responders stay connected during these challenging times."

PVT is building an alternate broadband route to establish resilient connectivity and ensure the Capitan community is not cut off during a disaster. The route will also connect Fort Stanton, managed by the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, with fiber broadband access. The construction will keep high-speed internet service online for homes, businesses and emergency services in case of disaster.

"After the fires, it became clear that communities like Capitan need more than one path to stay connected," said **PVT Chief Strategy and External Affairs Officer Mitch Hibbard**. "This project adds that redundancy and helps ensure families, businesses, and emergency responders can maintain critical communications when disaster strikes."

Hibbard says PVT is grateful to OBAE for the investment and to the Bureau of Land Management, the Village of Capitan, NMDOT, Lincoln County Commissioners and Otero County Electric Cooperative for their partnership and support throughout the project.

"It takes a lot of cooperation to build infrastructure in rural New Mexico, and we're proud to work alongside organizations that are committed to strengthening these communities," said **Hibbard.**

In August 2025 OBAE awarded PVT and TDS Telecom more than $1.25 million in disaster relief grants to support Ruidoso and the surrounding communities. TDS received a $251,300 grant. TDS's project is already underway, using its grant to help restore the final, hardest-to-reach areas in Ruidoso, with fiber-optic infrastructure.

PVT says it hopes to complete the project in December 2026, and OBAE has requested a six-month extension from the U.S. Treasury to ensure the job is finished in this broadband redundancy work. That extension request is pending.

TDS says it expects their project to be finished in early fall.

The Connectivity to Declared Disaster Areas Grants were specifically earmarked for broadband recovery. As outlined in the Three-Year Statewide Broadband Plan, OBAE participates in State emergency response and local emergency planning committees.

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The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is dedicated to serving New Mexico with a commitment to make high-speed broadband accessible to all New Mexicans. OBAE's mission is to expand and improve high-speed internet service with passionate leadership that drives bold, equitable, affordable and inclusive broadband solutions. OBAE seeks results that honor the state's rich heritage and elevate quality of life for all.

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