

# Oljato Trading Post Re-roofing Project

(9-28-20)

## Project Summary

This project will repair/replace the roof on the long-vacant 1921 Oljato Trading Post. The roof is in a very advanced state of deterioration, allowing water in at various locations, eroding the adobe and stone walls and compromising the structure.

## Applicant Information

The San Juan County Commission is the applicant for UNTF Non-Chapter Funding to assist the Oljato Trading Post Restoration Project in Monument Valley. The Commission is also in close contact with the Utah Division of State History/State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as well as the Navajo Nation (the building owner), and the Oljato Chapter (see attached resolutions). The SHPO recently applied for a \$10,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a Washington, D.C., based nonprofit historic preservation organization. The SHPO is also contributing \$5,000 toward the re-roofing project, and provided a \$10,000 grant earlier in 2020 for some much-needed stabilization and clean-up work on the building.

## Grant Request

The grant request is for \$35,000. The overall budget for the re-roofing project is \$50,000, based on pro-bono structural assessments and estimates provided by the SHPO's historic preservation architect. As noted above, the SHPO has applied for a \$10,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and has already earmarked \$5,000 of its own funds toward the project.

## Project Description

This one hundred year old was constructed in 1921 with additions in the 1930s and early '40s. The original structure has a rectangular trading hall with a shallow gable roof. It consists of a center "bull-pen" area for customers surrounded on three sides by an elevated floor for the clerks. Living quarters and storage areas are included in the additions. The walls are primarily double-wythe stacked native sandstone with adobe sections as well. The roof consists of rough-hewn logs over which is a later 1940s(?) roof structure consisting of a 2x4 grid overlaid with sheathing and roofing material. Most of the roofing material and some of the sheathing is missing, and what remains is in very poor condition (see photos).

## Immediate Need

The emergency is that the roof is in very poor condition and the numerous leaks threaten the integrity of the structure. The problem has been years in the making, but it has reached a point

where the resulting damage is going to be irreversible. The fragile materials--stacked stone and adobe--are especially prone to water damage, as evidenced by some significant cracks in the walls and the large quantity of "melted" adobe and plaster that have sloughed off due to water penetration over the years. A three-day clean-up effort in March 2020 stabilized some of the most fragile areas and removed the accumulated debris caused by water erosion. That clean-up effort followed the recommendations made in a structural report prepared by the Utah SHPO's historical architect in the summer of 2019. That assessment deemed the building to still be structurally viable, but unless the roof could be repaired soon there would be significant structural failures.

The Navajo Nation and Oljato Chapter own and are responsible for the building, but resources for preserving the building are scarce. The San Juan County Historical Commission has taken the lead in trying to raise funds and partnerships to preserve the building. They are coordinating closely with the Navajo Nation and they are taking advantage of grants and technical assistance from the SHPO. This partnership represents the first time a coordinated effort has been made on behalf of this historic building, which is one of the very few original trading posts left in the Four Corners area. The combination of an immediate structural need and an effective proponent partnership makes this the ideal time to act. Plus, winter is approaching, and getting a roof on now could prevent additional and potentially catastrophic water damage.

The assistance needed at this time is entirely financial. The SHPO has the architectural and technical expertise to help move this project forward. Getting a roof on the building would not only protect the structure, it would also demonstrate that progress is being made, which would strengthen support for the project. We saw that result during the March 2020 clean-up/stabilization effort, as many residents of the Oljato community stopped by to see what was going on and to express their support. We even have institutional support from Utah State University/Eastern. Some two dozen students and staff from the university's Price and Blanding campuses volunteered three days of their time during spring break to help with the clean-up. The time spent amounted to the \$10,000 match necessary for the grant.

### Expected Outcome

The initial outcome will be a sound roof that can protect the historic trading post for many years to come. The longer-term outcome is that the building will be functional once again, serving as a community center and as a cultural tourism destination. The San Juan County Historical Commission has met with numerous individuals and stakeholder groups to come up with a plan for the building that will meet short- and long-term community needs, including economic development. Contact for this organization/project is Robert McPherson, Board Member. The Oljato Trading Post is one of the few original and historically intact trading posts in the Four Corners area. It would provide a more authentic experience than is currently available in the larger, more commercially focused trading posts and tourist destinations.

The Oljato Trading Post would provide a unique experience for visitors, both as a distinctive tourist destination and as a venue for showcasing local culture, art, and traditional crafts and products. It would also serve as a gathering place for the local community. This vision for the

structure has been captured in a series of promotional drawings and sketches of what the facility could look like and how it might function (see attachments).

Photographs



Oljato Trading Post after March 2020 stabilization and clean-up



Roof condition-1



Roof condition-2



Interior damage due to water infiltration and tree-root impacts.



Architect’s rendering of the Oljato Trading Post’s future as a tourist destination and community center. The hogan at the lower left is one of the other historic structures on the property that will be preserved as part of the overall project.



Front elevation.