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NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

NAVAJO NATION
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

NAVAJO NATION
WATER RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Navajo Nation releases summary of comprehensive Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Wednesday, the Navajo Nation released a summary of a proposed agreement to settle all of the Nation’s water rights claims in the State of Arizona, which includes the Colorado River Upper Basin, the Colorado River Lower Basin, Little Colorado River Basin, the Gila River Basin, and groundwater.

The proposed Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement with the United States, the State of Arizona, the Hopi Tribe, the San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, and parties to the Little Colorado River adjudication is close to completion. Once the settlement agreement is final in early March, legislation to approve the agreement will be introduced before the Navajo Nation Council and a public comment period will begin.

“From my first day in office to today, achieving a water rights settlement has been a top priority. Now we know we are close. Once our negotiations are complete and our Council Delegates and the public will now discuss it. We turn to Congress for approval and funding of infrastructure to bring it home. This is a day all Navajos can celebrate and remember,” said Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren.

In April, the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission (WRC), established the Navajo Nation Water Rights Settlement Negotiation Team, comprised of Navajo Nation Council Delegates, the Office of the President and Vice-President, the Navajo Attorney General, the Department of Justice Water Rights Unit (WRU), the Navajo Department of Water Resources (DWR), and contracted consultants. Since then, the Negotiation Team has spent countless hours in discussion with various stakeholders over settlement details.

The Nation’s primary objective with this settlement is to affirm and quantify the Nation’s enforceable rights to water in Arizona and to secure funding to build much needed water delivery infrastructure on the Navajo Nation. The proposed settlement offers a path forward in closing the severe water access equity gap that exists in our communities and offers the promise of a healthy and vibrant future for our people.

“This settlement presents an opportunity for our Nation to affirm our inherent rights to water, which is essential to life and the continuation of our people for generations. This proposed

settlement will secure much needed water to many Navajo families and communities all across the Arizona portion of the Nation. This approach offers our people the possibility of actual water delivery in their homes at a greater quantity and lower cost than if we continue litigating our Arizona water claims. This is our time to claim what is ours," said Speaker Crystalyn Curley, who will sponsor the settlement legislation for the 25th Navajo Nation Council to consider.

"This proposed comprehensive Arizona water settlement offers the Nation a clear path to a Navajo future marked by strong water security, healthy communities, and economic promise. There is no faster or more thorough way to transform the Nation's vision for a global Navajo water supply system into reality. With intensifying climate conditions and biological risk like we saw in recent years, our people need piped water in their homes more urgently than ever. This settlement gives me true hope for a healthy and vibrant future for our Navajo people," said Navajo Attorney General Ethel Branch.

The WRC, WRU, and DWR are providing information on the proposed comprehensive Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement via KTNN 660 AM on Wednesday, Feb. 28 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Navajo community members are encouraged to listen in and share comments and questions. The radio forum is a part of the Nation's public education campaign that will include 13 informational meetings across the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation over the next few weeks offering community members an opportunity to voice their concerns.

For more information please go to: <https://nnwrc.navajo-nsn.gov>.

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