



PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Navajo Nation Secures Water Rights in Arizona, New Mexico through Historic Settlements

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—May 24, 2024—History was made for the Navajo Nation and its water rights. Today, the Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed the [Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement](#) and the [New Mexico Rio San Jose Stream System Settlement](#) that would bring much needed water to communities across the Navajo Nation. Yesterday the 25th Navajo Nation Council unanimously passed the settlements and Speaker Crystalyne Curley [signed the legislation](#).

“Today is monumental. Today is for my grandchildren and their children. We celebrate this significant and historical step toward water security for our Navajo people for the next 100 years. Our people have been waiting far too long for piped water in their homes. With these settlements, that can now be a reality,” said [Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission](#) Vice Chair Earl Tulley who represents Navajo’s Central Agency. “*Tó éí iiná áté* – Water is Life – as Diné we believe that to our very being. Navajo are spiritual people who have had hard lived experiences, but we still have our language, we still have our culture, and we still live within our four sacred mountains. That is a blessing.”



Through both settlements, the Navajo Nation is able to transport, divert, and import water from other sources to support Navajo communities where water is often contaminated and scarce. In Arizona, the Navajo Nation can move water between basins and across state lines. This opens up many opportunities for infrastructure development, water projects, and partnerships with chapter communities and Navajo citizens.

Earlier this week, both legislations were debated in three committees and heard during a special session where the support was abundant among Council members. The Arizona agreement settles all claims in Arizona for the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and the San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe. The Hopi Tribe’s Council also approved the settlement this week.

“On behalf of the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission, I share tremendous thanks to the 25th Navajo Nation Council and the Delegates who served on the Water Rights Negotiation Team. You all stepped up and showed that water for our Navajo communities is your top priority. Putting first our Navajo elders, youth, and those generations yet to come exhibits true leadership,” Vice Chair Tulley said.

Since January of this year, the Water Rights Commission along with the attorneys from the Navajo Department of Justice's Water Rights Unit and hydrologists from the Navajo Department of Water Resources provided over 50 public education sessions on the Arizona and New Mexico settlements. Many community members attended to ask questions and share their concerns. Several Council Delegates also showed their support and sat through the three-to-five-hour sessions that covered current adjudications, updates on settlement negotiations, proposed projects, and current and future water uses. When the New Mexico and Arizona legislations were introduced on May 10 and May 13, respectively, the public had another opportunity to submit comments.



“The Navajo Water Rights Commission gives thanks to Diné across the Nation who supported the settlements and attended the sessions. The Commission also extends heartfelt gratitude to the incredible team of attorneys, scientists, strategists, experts, and other skilled professionals who made these two settlements their life over the last few months and years. With their unwavering dedication, we are here making history,” Vice Chair Tulley added.

Next, both the Arizona and New Mexico settlements will be introduced as federal legislation by the Congressional delegation in those respective states.

Learn more about the Arizona and New Mexico settlements at <https://nnwrc.navajo-nsn.gov/>.

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