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For more information, contact:

Karin Stangl, Public Information Officer
Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission
(505) 827-6139

Interstate Stream Commissioners Meet in Special Session To Discuss Proposed Water Rights Settlement Agreement with the Navajo Nation

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – The Interstate Stream Commission directed staff members to continue to work toward completing negotiations on the proposed water rights settlement agreement with the Navajo Nation in a special meeting held on Friday, February 6, in Santa Fe.

“Interstate Stream Commission staff was directed to continue discussions regarding the settlement with interested parties,” said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. “Commissioners directed staff to brief San Juan Basin legislators and other interested legislators as soon as possible. Also, staff was instructed to continue negotiations with the Navajo Nation to arrive at final draft settlement documents for the Interstate Stream Commission to consider, while continuing to address issues that were raised by the public regarding the San Juan River Basin proposed settlement agreement.”

The proposed agreement, made public on December 5, 2003, could potentially resolve the claims of the Navajo Nation for the use of waters of the San Juan River Basin in northwestern New Mexico. The proposed settlement agreement is intended to adjudicate the Navajo Nation’s water rights and provide associated water development projects for the benefit of the Navajo Nation in exchange for a release of claims to water that could potentially displace existing non-Navajo water users in the basin.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees its staff.

The nine-member Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico’s right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.

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