



News Release

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Navajo Nation and New Mexico Office of State Engineer Host Tour of San Juan River Settlement Area

A first-hand look at communities that need the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project

WINDOW ROCK, AZ – The Navajo Nation and the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer are hosting a news conference and tour today to highlight areas that will be affected by the San Juan Settlement and proposed Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), and New Mexico State Engineer John D’Antonio are among the attendees.

“This settlement is crucial to the Navajo Nation,” said Shirley. “We are hosting this tour because it is vital that people see the conditions that some of our people are living in right now – that there are people in America without running water. This is one of the primary reasons why we need to move forward with this water project.”

The tour starts at 9 a.m. at the Navajo Nation Council Chambers in Window Rock. It follows the proposed Project route, highlighting the many communities that do not have an available water supply, and ends at Farmington City Hall.

“This negotiation is a move in the right direction and is the result of a lot of hard work and cooperation between the Navajo Nation, the State of New Mexico and the federal government,” said D’Antonio. “Navajos and non-Navajos have waited many years for a resolution of water claims in this region and this settlement protects existing uses of water and gives these communities a secure future.”

The San Juan River Settlement Agreement provides for the development of a rural water supply system to serve Indians and non-Indian residents in northwest New Mexico and on to the Navajo Nation in far western Arizona. Many of the communities in this region do not have access to a renewable and sustainable water supply.

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“The settlement is a bold step to address the need for a water system in this area of New Mexico and will have far reaching benefits to multiple communities,” said Sen. Bingaman. “It gives this region security and a way to pursue economic development to remain a viable region in the state – all the while ensuring that these communities’ children and grandchildren will have access to a reliable source of clean water.”

The settlement agreement would resolve the Navajo Nation’s water rights without litigation, supply water to Gallup, New Mexico, and recognize existing and authorized uses of water in the San Juan River Basin including the San Juan-Chama Project, which will provide drinking water to Albuquerque and Santa Fe. In exchange for a release of claims to water that could otherwise displace non-Navajo users in the San Juan Basin, the agreement would adjudicate water rights to provide water development projects for the Navajo Nation, including the Navajo-Gallup Project and the Farmington-Shiprock Municipal Pipeline.

“This settlement is a win-win solution for everyone involved and crucial for all of us depending on water from the San Juan Basin,” said Gallup Mayor Bob Rosebrough. Our current water supply will be depleted in 15 years and many Navajos who do not have tap water in their homes come to our municipal water points to get water for household use. Up until now there was real uncertainty for our city’s future.”

Farmington Mayor Bill Standley and members of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission will also be on hand to discuss the Indian and non-Indian benefits and partnerships.

Governor Bill Richardson and Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr. signed the settlement on April 19, 2005. The next step is to have the settlement agreement approved by Congress and executed by the United States, acting through the Secretary of the Interior. New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission staff is working with the United States Department of the Interior and Department of Justice officials and the New Mexico Congressional delegation on federal legislation to authorize the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project and to fund the settlement agreement. It is anticipated that the legislation will be introduced in 2006.

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