



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo Nation, City of Gallup sign water project MOU, President, Mayor cite partnership as key to success

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., and Gallup Mayor Harry Mendoza today signed a memorandum of understanding to work together to see the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project funded and constructed.

“I have every confidence that we’re going to legislate that San Juan River water settlement, and have put in there upwards of \$800 million,” President Shirley said during the MOU signing ceremony at the Karigan Professional Building. “That having been done, it’s water for Gallup, water for the Navajo people, my people in the eastern portion of Navajoland.”

The President, Mayor Mendoza and members of the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission all said the MOU is an example of neighbors working together in partnership to get things done for their people.

U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici have introduced legislation – called the Northwestern New Mexico Rural Water Projects Act, S.1171 – to enact the settlement of the Navajo Nation’s water claims to San Juan River Basin water. The law would codify an April 2005 agreement between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico.

The law would also fund construction of the Navajo-Gallup Water Project to provide a sustainable water supply to the eastern Navajo Nation where an estimated 40 percent of residents haul water for use in their homes.

The Navajo-Gallup MOU and Senate bill also ensures that Gallup has water to meet its future needs by constructing a pipeline to bring San Juan River water to the city.

“The signing of this memorandum of understanding today is by far a historical step of the Navajo Nation, McKinley County and the City of Gallup working together to bring water to the region,” Mayor Mendoza said Tuesday.



Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., and Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly look on after signing the Navajo-Gallup MOU to partner for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. Gallup Mayor Harry Mendoza joined the President to sign the historic document on Tuesday.

Expressing heartfelt appreciation to Navajo Nation and Gallup officials and staff who worked on the MOU and San Juan River Water Settlement agreement, the President said Navajos in the eastern portion of Navajoland have waited 40 years to see water flow to their homes.

Lena Fowler, vice chair of the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission, which hosted the signing ceremony, said it has been a long journey to this point, and some individuals and groups did not believe the Navajo Nation and city could work together as they have.

“We had to negotiate a water settlement,” he said. “It represents the end product of about 30 years of litigation.”

The agreement, which ensures Navajo water rights to 56 percent of the San Juan River, had to be taken to all the affected chapters in the Eastern Navajo Agency to get their consensus.

Today’s signing of the Navajo-Gallup MOU is one more step but shows what’s achievable, Mr. Denetsosie said.

N.M. Sen. Lidio Rainaldi said it was good to see the partnership between the Navajo Nation and city.

“It’s a privilege to see the cooperation between the Diné and the bilagaanas working hard for the benefit mostly of the people and especially for the children to come for our country,” he said. “Our children at least need the very basic necessities of life; water, electricity, roads and education. And I think we’re charged as elected officials to see that this is going to happen.”

Among the officials attending the signing ceremony was Vice President Ben Shelly, Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie, N.M. Rep. Patty Lundstrom, who is chairman of Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project Steering Committee, N.M. Rep. John Pena, McKinley County Commissioner Ernest Becenti, Jr., N.M. Sen. John Pinto, and Cal Curley representing N.M. Congressman Tom Udall.

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“There are people that believe we should not work in cooperation. There are people that believe that it cannot be done, that Indian nations cannot work with non-Indian municipalities,” she said. “There are people that are completely opposed to our journey to bring reliable safe water to our people, but that’s the journey that we’re on, and we will succeed and we are succeeding.”

Navajo Nation Attorney General Louis Denetsosie said this was another step in a “long, hard road before we get the water flowing to everyone.”



Officials attending the signing of the Navajo-Gallup MOU from left to right are Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission Chairman Ray Gilmore, McKinley County Commissioner Ernest Becenti, Jr., State Rep. John Pena, who is a former Gallup mayor, Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission Vice Chair Lena Fowler, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., N.M. Sen. John Pinto, N.M. Sen. Lidio Rainaldi, N.M. State Rep. Patty Lundstrom, Gallup City Councilor Jay Azua Gallup Mayor Harry Mendoza and Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly.