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President Shelly Supports LCR Settlement Education

LEUPP, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly reaffirmed he is listening to the opinion of the Navajo people about the Little Colorado River Water Settlement.

President Shelly stated his position last night at the Leupp chapter house. The meeting was the fifth in a series of seven scheduled meetings about the Little Colorado Water Settlement Agreement and Sen. Jon Kyl's senate bill 2109.

"I support the education from the water commission," President Shelly said before an audience of about 130 people.

In an eight minute closing statement after a five-hour meeting, President Shelly spoke nearly entirely in Navajo.

President Shelly said he hasn't signed anything regarding the Little Colorado Water Settlement and that he wants the people to be educated about the settlement. He added that he is offering more education to the Navajo people than what was offered than in 2010 when the Navajo Nation approved the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement, which was never ratified by Congress.

Vice President Rex Lee Jim attended the meeting too and spoke to the audience mostly in Navajo.

Vice President Jim said the language of the settlement is difficult to understand because its written in complicated legal terms, but that people needed to understand the proposed settlement.

The meetings were set in areas and chapters that would be directly affected by the proposed settlement that has been negotiated for more than 30 years.

Leupp, a community of about 1,000 people, would be one of the communities directly affected by the proposed water settlement.

Part of the settlement would be money to build a ground water project and a water pipeline between Leupp and Dilkon, which is about 40 miles away.

The project would cost about \$100 million and would allow access to nearly 5,000 acre-feet of drinkable water per year. Currently, the communities use about 441 acre-feet per year of water.

Though many people have spoken against the settlement through the five meetings, solutions and alternatives aren't being presented.

According to the power point presentation at the meetings, if the Navajo Nation doesn't settle claims to the Little Colorado River, potentially an Arizona state judge could decide the fate of Navajo claims to the water.

The proposed settlement would:

- Provide the Navajo Nation unlimited right to N-Aquifer ground water for domestic and municipal uses (homes, hospitals, schools and others)
- Provide the Navajo Nation with the right to pump as much groundwater as it wants from the C-Aquifer, while placing limits on the amounts that non-Navajos (including the Hopi Tribe) can pump near the Navajo Reservation
- Protect the right to use all unappropriated surface water from the Little Colorado River
- Prohibit the construction of new reservoirs anywhere in the LCR basin without the consent of the Navajo Nation
- Prohibit new surface water irrigation by any party, except the Navajo Nation
- Recognize all historic and existing irrigation on the reservation
- Fund the critical infrastructure projects in Leupp-Dilkon and Ganado (and provide for operation and maintenance funding of these projects)

The settlement does not include resolve or waive Navajo claims to the larger Colorado River.

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