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## **Navajo President Shelly Supports LCR Settlement**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly issued the following statement supporting the Navajo-Hopi Little Colorado River Water Settlement.

“Water is life. Water is our most precious and sacred resource.

As President of the Navajo Nation, I have long had a vision for our people, our homelands, and our Nation as a whole. My vision’s foundation includes prosperity and bettering the quality of life for our Navajo people. I want the opportunity for family’s to raise their children and grandchildren with running water in their homes.

Securing our water rights is essential to making this vision a reality.

In the coming weeks, the Navajo Nation government faces a critical decision regarding our water rights claims to the Little Colorado River (LCR). For more than 30 years, we have fought to establish our rights to the Little Colorado River water, including the washes and the groundwater. Our litigation has been a time consuming and costly battle against our Hopi neighbors.

Now, we have the opportunity to move forward and put three decades of litigation behind us. I support the Navajo-Hopi Little Colorado River Water Rights settlement because the benefits of the settlement far outweigh the risks of continued litigation.

This settlement preserves and firmly establishes our water rights and guarantees the right to use all Little Colorado River water flowing under, over, or through the Navajo Nation.

The settlement also provides hundreds of millions of dollars to build water projects that will bring running water to Navajo homes. Communities and businesses will have the opportunity to grow and prosper without being held back by limited water supplies. As sacred as water is to our belief system, water has the power to create a Navajo economic life that would create jobs so Navajos people won’t have to seek employment off the reservation.

In our many meetings about the settlement, I have heard people saying that we need to go after federal money to build the same projects the LCR settlement provides and not settle. But in the economic realities of continued federal, state and tribal budget cutbacks, I ask where is this money to be found? The quarter of a billion dollars needed to build the water projects proposed in the LCR settlement would need Congressional action.

While we know federal money is limited, President Barack Obama has made settling tribal water rights claims a priority. Earlier this month, we broke ground on the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply project that will bring running water to thousands of Navajos. The development resulted from settling Navajo Nation water rights claims to the San Juan River in New Mexico.

Aside from bringing running water to homes, if we don't support the LCR settlement, that means we continue our 33-year litigation in court without an end in sight. And when we do finally reach that end after spending a great deal of money and time, we may be left with a fraction of the water proposed in the LCR settlement. Besides having less water, money for valuable water infrastructure would be lost, making usage of our water rights claims difficult.

Without this settlement, we leave the LCR issue to be resolved by our children and grandchildren. We must not fear settling now. Our children's future will be better with today's settlement. We cannot and must not leave our future with small remnants of water rights claims resembling this settlement.

The time has come for the Council to make a decision. I know this settlement is complex. I know it is controversial. But I ask that you consider our alternatives if we don't settle our water rights claims to the Little Colorado River. I ask that you think of the welfare of our Nation's children and grandchildren. This is our time to exemplify visionary leadership for our people. I urge the Navajo Council to approve this settlement and bring prosperity to our people."

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