



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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UTAH-NAVAJO WATER SETTLEMENT WILL SECURE 81,500 ACRE FEET OF WATER PER YEAR FOR NAVAJO UTAH CITIZENS

NAPI-On Friday, Jul. 1, President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with Utah Chapter Officials, 23rd Navajo Nation Council Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Council Delegates, and other officials to discuss the Utah-Navajo Water Rights Settlement.

The Office of the President and Vice President called for an independent review of the Settlement by consulting environmental law and water rights attorneys, Daniel and Amy Cordalis. Both attorneys provided a verbal review of the Settlement during the meeting.

The attorneys stated that the Settlement can provide 81,500 acre-feet of water per year from the San Juan River and groundwater to tribal members living in the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation Reservation. It is also estimated to allocate almost \$200 million dollars of state and federal funds for water and infrastructure projects.

In order to quantify the settlement amount of 81,500 acre-feet per year, the amount of practical irrigable acres in Navajo Utah was considered. The market value, in terms of crop prices and infra-

structure required to provide water to fields, was also a consideration.

The Utah Navajo Water Right Settlement secures the Nation 81,500 acre-feet of water per



During a meeting held at NAPI on Friday, Jul. 1, President Russell Begaye asked if the Utah Navajo Water Rights Settlement could affect future settlements with the states of New Mexico or Arizona. The attorneys present stated that the Settlement would not affect a future New Mexico or Arizona water right settlement.

year, which is not subject to loss, abandonment or non-usage. The Nation will always have the right to that amount of water.

Based on average per capita water use, 81,500 acre-feet of water could support 300,000 people per year, or it could irrigate between 25,000 to 40,000 acres.

Priority dates of the Nation's water rights are based on the creation date of the area of Navajo Reservation the water is being used. Based on a historic principle of water law, the first person to

have used the water is first in the line of priority and also the first to have their water rights protected in times of shortage.

The settlement includes a waiver of Navajo Nation historic claims against the state of Utah, the United States and other parties for any and all claims the tribe has against these parties within

the state of Utah. Future claims are not waived, however, including claims related to settlement violations. All Indian water rights settlements have similar waivers.

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The status of the settlement is such that all Utah Chapters have thus far approved the settlement. All seven Utah chapters in attendance at the meeting voiced their support of the settlement.

The Office of the President and Vice President commend the Utah Chapters along with their respective delegates for working hard to draft the settlement.

In January 2016, the Navajo Nation Council voted 13-7 to approve legislation supporting the Utah Navajo Water Settlement. If the Navajo Nation is going to push for a legislative package, it will have to do so before the September Congressional lame duck session.