



**JOE SHIRLEY, JR.**  
*President*

**FRANK J. DAYISH, JR.**  
*Vice-President*

## **THE NAVAJO NATION**

**For Immediate Release**  
June 6, 2006

**Contact:** George Hardeen  
Communications Director  
Office – 928-871-7917  
Cell – 928-309-8532

### **Navajo Water Rights Commission, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission obtain Upper Colorado River Commission OK on hydrologic determination**

*San Juan River Water Settlement continues to move forward to Congress*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The San Juan River Water Settlement took another significant step forward Tuesday when the Upper Colorado River Commission accepted a “hydrologic determination” that there is enough available water for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

The action means the long-awaited San Juan River Water Settlement and the project now moves another important step forward to Congress and eventual completion.

“This is a great day for the Navajo Nation as it pursues its water rights and a share of needed water for growth and development,” Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr. said. “I congratulate the diligent work of our Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission, our staff in the Navajo Water Resources Department, and especially our friends at the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission. Nothing is ever accomplished without working together, and this step forward demonstrates that clearly.”

The Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission and New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission attended the Upper Colorado River Commission meeting in Jackson Hole, Wyo., when the resolution vote took place. The action is significant because federal law requires that this kind of determination be made that enough water is available in the Navajo Reservoir and San Juan River before the U.S. Interior secretary can sign any contracts to move the project forward.

“You can’t overstate how important an obstacle this was to overcome,” Ray Gilmore, chairman of the Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission. “It certainly eliminates a huge obstacle.”

The San Juan River Water Settlement legislation is expected to bring critical water development to the Navajo Nation, which is in desperate need of it. One year ago, the Nation and the State of New Mexico signed the agreement to resolve the Navajo Nation's claims on the San Juan River in New Mexico.

Resolving these claims will have widespread benefits for all of the water users in the Colorado River Basin, especially the water users in the Upper Basin.

“The Navajo settlement agreement was reached only after many years of difficult negotiations and compromises on all sides,” said John Leeper, an engineer with the Navajo Water Resources Dept. “For this agreement to succeed, the upper basin commission needed to take the action it did, and that was to support New Mexico's proposal for a hydrologic determination and depletion schedule.”

– MORE –

The Navajo Nation has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness and ability to work with its neighbors in resolving difficult water issues. It has supported the efforts of the Jicarilla Apache Nation to address San Juan River environmental matters. And it has been willing to support efforts of Colorado River water users as they faced those same environmental issues.

The Navajo Indian Irrigation Project legislation requires that anytime there's a new contract to take water from any of the reservoirs in the Upper Colorado River Basin, the Interior secretary must conduct what's called a "hydrologic determination" to ensure there is enough water available. Yesterday's Commission action determined that there is enough water for the Navajo project.

"Our water rights settlement agreement moves on now," said Navajo Water Right Commission Vice Chair Lena Fowler. "It's a big victory for the Navajo Nation and New Mexico. When we were driving in, we looked off to the right and there was an eagle. It flew back this way and we said, 'Hey, that a good sign.'"

# # #