



# THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 7, 2007

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## Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., says Navajo-Gallup Pipeline will provide secure, permanent homeland to Eastern Navajo

FARMINGTON, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., threw his strongest support behind the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project when he presented comments here Wednesday for the draft Environmental Impact Statement on the project.

The hearing at San Juan Community College was the fifth and final held by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on the \$720 million project that would provide a safe, reliable and renewable water supply from the San Juan River to eastern Navajo Nation communities, the City of Gallup, and the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

The project would consist of two pipelines that run a total of 267 miles. One would be the San Juan Lateral which would divert and treat water from the San Juan River just west of the Nenahnezad Chapter to pump to communities in the Shiprock area. From there, the pipeline would follow Highway 491 south to connect with future water systems in Crownpoint, Gallup and Window Rock. In all, 43 Navajo chapter would benefit from the project.

The other would be the Cutter Lateral which would divert and treat water from the Cutter Reservoir east of Bloomfield, and then pump that water to systems in the Eastern Navajo Agency to Ojo Encino and the Jicarilla Apache Nation along Highway 550.

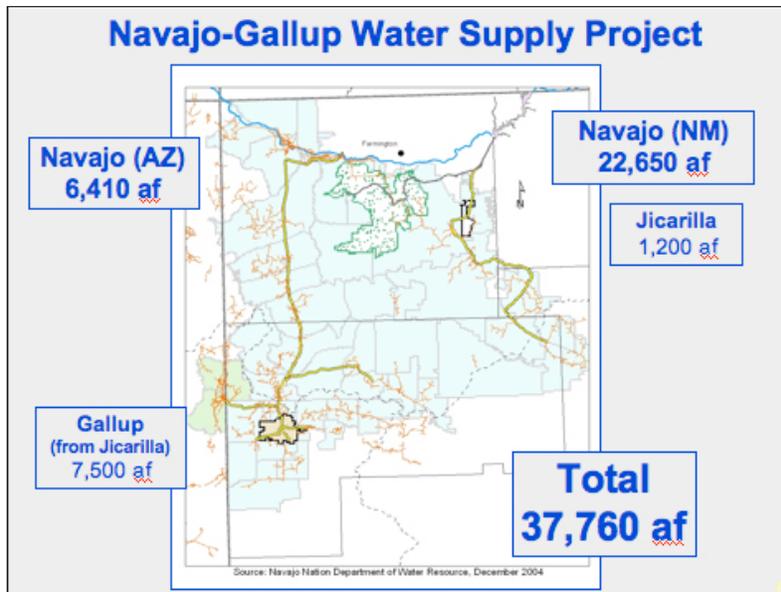
On April 19, U.S. Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici introduced the Northwest New Mexico Water Projects Act – S. 1171 – in support of the project. The bill would authorize and secure the funding needed for the construction of the needed project, and approve the historic 2005 settlement agreement between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico.

“The project is critical to providing a secure, permanent homeland for the Navajo people,” President Shirley said. “Without this project, Navajo families will continue to haul water and economic growth will be discouraged.

With this project, most Navajo families will finally have potable drinking water in their homes in the Eastern Navajo Agency. The Navajo Nation, and I as President, strongly support the San Juan River (PNM) Alternative.”

The President was joined by more than a dozen speakers who offered comments in support of the project.

“What I wanted to do tonight was to enter into the record a certified copy of the resolution adopted by the (Farmington) City Council in February 2005 which supports the Navajo water rights settlement,” said Farmington City Attorney Jay Burnham.



"I just testified at the hearing that the City of Farmington supports the Navajo-Gallup water project as a portion and part and parcel of the claims to water rights on the San Juan River."

Martha Charley of Rincon Marquez, a member of the Eastern Navajo Health Board, said she represented people in Whitehorse Lake, Sand Springs and Rincon Marquez.

"Oh, yes, we definitely need this water," she said. "At Whitehorse Lake, we don't have any water at all. So, therefore, we have to travel many miles at least just to get a good drinking water, and sometimes we have to go nearby like a windmill, pond or collect rainwater for other uses, like to do dishes, utility water for animals and stuff like that."

Chee Smith of Whitehorse Lake, a community of about 2,000 people, said he drove to Farmington with a vanload of elders to testify in support of the pipeline project.

"We have to travel 35 miles every day to go to Crownpoint to buy food, to get the water," he said. "It takes the wear and tear on vehicles. And then we're kind of like a Third World country with no water in Whitehorse. We can't get any economic development. We cannot put up any schools, put up housing, a hospital or police department there. All the services are more than 35 miles away at Crownpoint. That's why we need and want the water."

Navajo Nation Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie, who represents Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, and Whitehorse Lake, said he sees cut grass and flowers, big buildings or homes when he comes to Farmington but that communities in the Eastern Navajo Agency or the Chaco Basin cannot have that standard of living because of the lack of water.

He says history has shown that drought was a factor that drove the ancient puebloans from Chaco Canyon but that

it is the intention of today's Navajo people to remain and not go the way of the Anasazi.

He said if final approval is not granted for the project, it would have an impact far beyond the water issue. Schools, clinics, and jobs may go the way of the ancients if there is no way to sustain continued growth.

President Shirley told the BOR officials that the Navajo people of the Eastern Agency have waited decades for a source of reliable water to be fulfilled.

"The Navajo Nation has reached an historic agreement with the State of the New Mexico, and Governor Bill Richardson supports it," he said. "The City of Gallup supports it. The Jicarilla Apache Nation supports it, and now we seek the support of the U.S. Congress."

The President said the Navajo Nation worked cooperatively with the City of Gallup and the Jicarilla Apache Nation to investigate all viable alternative project configurations. Not surprisingly, he said, the preferred alternative is the San Juan River (PNM) Alternative because it will provide a long-term supply of water, water treatment facilities, and includes transmission of municipal & industrial water.

He said there are some 80,000 people now living in the area, and that population is expected to increase to 250,000 by 2040. Many of them have had to haul water for decades, and the cost of doing so is rising with the price of fuel.

He said a project like this would create growth corridors where future communities can be built with ready access to roads, electricity and potable water. Up to now, he said, the stagnation of economic development and the lack of water infrastructure on the Navajo Nation has forced many Navajo families to move to far-away cities to find their employment.

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