



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**President Nez advocates for a seat at the table for the
Navajo Nation in the management of the Colorado River Basin**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez speaks to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland during a meeting with tribal leaders in Albuquerque, N.M. on March 28, 2022.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was among a group of tribal leaders that met with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland in Albuquerque, N.M. on Monday, to advocate for meaningful involvement in the development of the long-term management of the Colorado River Basin.

“The Navajo Nation has a dire need for access to clean water. 30 to 40-percent of our Navajo people do not have running water. Proposed operations of the Colorado River Basin can directly impact water sustainability for Navajo communities. It’s important for the Department of the Interior to hear the Nation’s concerns and commit to providing universal access to clean water as a component of fulfilling its federal trust responsibility to the Navajo Nation and tribes. Tribal engagement is critical to design solutions for universal access to clean water and the management

framework for the Colorado River Basin. The Navajo Nation needs to be included as a full participant in all discussions that affect the Navajo Nation’s water,” said President Nez.

On Nov. 15, 2021, President Nez and 19 other tribal leaders issued a letter requesting to meet with Secretary Haaland to discuss Colorado River Basin matters, to include full tribal participation in updating the “guiding principles,” tribal access to clean water, water rights settlements, full use of tribal water rights, tribal sovereignty, and federal accountability to tribal trust responsibilities.



Secretary Haaland responded through a letter to the tribal leaders on Dec. 9, 2021, stating her support for bringing tribal voices and perspectives to everyday decisions made by the federal government, especially those relating to water management in a time of increasing scarcity. Secretary Haaland also invited the tribal leaders to Monday’s listening session, and committed to additional government-to-government consultation and designated Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo to serve as the point of contact.

“We are very thankful to Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary Trujillo for their support and taking the time to hear directly from the First People of this country on these critical matters. The Biden-Harris Administration has a seat at the table for tribal nations and we will continue to work together in good faith with all partners to move this effort forward,” added President Nez.

The Colorado River is managed and operated under the 1922 Colorado River Compact, federal laws, court decisions and decrees, contracts, and regulatory guidelines collectively known as the "Law of the River." The collection of documents regulates the use and management of the Colorado River among the seven basin states and Mexico. Historically, tribes in the Colorado River Basin have not been able to engage in the federal and state process.

The Navajo Nation has unique challenges due to its land base, which straddles the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins and land spanning across the Four Corners region. In addition, the Navajo Nation continues to negotiate its water rights in the state of Arizona.

The Navajo Nation, through the Department of Water Resources and Department of Justice, will continue working with the coalition of Colorado River Basin tribes, states, and other stakeholders to advance water management efforts with the federal government.

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