



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Nation leaders finalize the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act with the United States and Utah



MONUMENT VALLEY, UT – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council welcomed U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT), Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, and Utah Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson to Monument Valley, UT on Friday, for a historic signing ceremony to finalize the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act that will deliver running water to many Navajo families that reside on the Navajo Nation within the state of Utah.

The signing of the conformed agreement is consistent with the provisions approved by Congress in 2020. The following provisions are part of the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement:

- Settles all current and future claims by the Navajo Nation for water rights within Utah;

- Ratifies the proposed water rights settlement between the Navajo Nation and the State of Utah, confirming the Navajo Nation's right to deplete 81,500 acre-feet of water per year from Utah's Colorado River Basin apportionment; and
- Authorizes approximately \$220 million for water infrastructure to provide water infrastructure, which will provide clean drinking water, to Navajo communities in Utah.



“We are located on the ancestral lands of our Diné people. Since time immemorial, Diné people have resided here and have continued to create their permanent homeland and livelihood within this region. Present day, this area is home to the community of Oljato, which is one of the eight Navajo Utah communities who will directly benefit from the Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Agreement. This historic occasion is the product of decades of hard work and diligence of all parties, and will benefit over 40-percent of Navajo homes in San Juan County alone. These communities located in this area of Utah, have been at the forefront of water insecurity and have managed to endure years of lack of access to clean, running water. I am pleased to welcome Secretary Haaland, Senator Romney, Governor Cox, and all of the leaders here today to mark this historic achievement,” said President Nez.

More than 40-percent of Navajo households in Utah lack running water or adequate sanitation. In some cases, such as in the community of Oljato on the Arizona-Utah border, a single spigot on a desolate road, miles from any residence, serves 900 people. In June 2019, President Nez testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife and called upon lawmakers to pass the settlement legislation immediately.

“Water is life. Those are the words that we hear from our elders and youth so often. Today's signing is the culmination of many years of work and commitment of past and present leaders. This is not about what we did as leaders, but what is to come for our people by way of this agreement between two the United States, the State of Utah, and the Navajo Nation. This agreement represents life for our Navajo people — for the generations who are yet to be born and those who continue to aspire for a greater quality of life,” said Vice President Lizer.

Secretary Haaland, the first Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary at the federal level, recalled the challenges of growing up without running water in her home as a young child. She commended Navajo Nation and Utah leaders for their commitment to delivering more water resources to families and communities.

Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. was joined by his colleagues Rickie Nez, Mark Freeland, Charlaine Tso, Raymond Smith, Jr., as he presented Sen. Romney with an honorary blanket for his support and sponsorship of the settlement bill in the U.S. Senate. Navajo Nation Department of Justice Assistant Attorney General for the Water Rights Unit, Michelle Yazzie, hosted the event and Navajo Hataáíii Avery Denny provided the opening and closing prayers.

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