



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Carlene Tenakhongva
Chief of Staff, Office of the Chairman
The Hopi Tribe
(928) 734-3102

Michele Crank
Communications Office
Office of the President and Vice President
928.871.7000

TWO NATIONS, ONE VOICE COMMUNICATED TO GOVERNOR DUCEY, STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Phoenix, AZ -- Governor Douglas A. Ducey, Senator John S. McCain and Senator Jeff Flake met with Navajo and Hopi Tribal leadership today for a momentous discussion about Little Colorado water rights issues. Hopi Chairman Herman Honanie, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Speaker of the Twenty-Third Navajo Nation Tribal Council LoRenzo C. Bates pledged cooperation to address long-standing issues related to the Little Colorado River. The meeting also included a number of state and local government representatives, and non-Indian water users.

“We live in a thirsty land,” said Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. We cannot provide economic development for our people without a reliable water supply.” Hopi Chairman Herman Honanie agreed. “Water is life for both tribes,” said Chairman Honanie.

The State parties have pledged their cooperation to develop a settlement. “Water is the defining issue for the future of our state,” said Senator McCain. “We cannot have a predictable future without completing the Indian water settlements.” Governor Ducey echoed Senator McCain’s remarks. “A water settlement for the Little Colorado River is a high strategic priority for Arizona.” Both Senator McCain and Senator Flake agreed to introduce federal legislation to implement a water settlement if the parties reach agreement.

Significantly, Navajo and Hopi leaders pledged to cooperate to present a unified position. “We are two nations, one voice,” said Hopi Chairman Honanie. Navajo President Begaye pledged to move quickly. “Both tribes are prepared to move forward to discuss settlement, said President Begaye. Navajo Speaker LoRenzo C. Bates also pledged to support negotiations. “Settlement for the Little Colorado is a high priority for the Twenty-Third Navajo Nation Council.” Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd added, “It’s not going to be easy, but we have learned from the previous attempt. Settlements are about compromise, but it needs to be done. Water rights is a priority of the Navajo Nation Council.”



Left to right: Senator Jeff Flake, Arizona Governor Douglas A. Ducey, Hopi Chairman Herman Honanie, Senator John S. McCain and Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.



The Hopi delegation of council representatives and Chairman Honanie stood along side President Begaye and Speaker of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council Lorenzo Bates to address long-standing water rights issues related to the Little Colorado River.

Water rights to the Little Colorado River and its sources are the subject of the long-running Little Colorado Water Rights Adjudication. The case was filed in Apache County Superior Court in 1978 and involves nearly 2,000 claimants, including the United States, the Hopi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the cities of Flagstaff, Winslow and Holbrook, and farmers and ranchers throughout the Little Colorado River Basin. Both tribes claim priority water rights. The case is ongoing.

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