



For more information, press only:
Office of the Chairman
Desk (928) 734-3102
Fax (928) 734-6665
www.hopi-nsn.gov

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
May 12, 2016**

HOPI TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS MEET TO PROTECT HOPI WATER RIGHTS

PHOENIX, AZ – Hopi Tribal Council members met this week in Phoenix to discuss ways to protect the Hopi Tribe’s water rights.

In a special joint meeting of the Hopi Tribal Council’s Land Commission and Water and Energy Committee, tribal leaders came together to discuss strategy for tribal participation in the Little Colorado River adjudication and in upcoming water settlement negotiations.

“The Hopi Tribe is looking for ways to aggressively assert and protect the Hopi Tribe’s water rights,” explained Water/Energy Team Chairman Norman Honanie. “Land and water are vital resources for the Hopi Tribe,” added Land Commission Chairman Lamar Keevama. “Our team is making great progress working together to develop our strategy,” explained Chairman Keevama.

Participants in the joint meeting included Tribal Council Chairman Herman Honanie, Vice Chairman Alfred Lomahquahu, Jr., and members of the Hopi Tribal Council’s Land Commission and Water and Energy Task Team. These include Water and Energy Task Team Chairman Norman Honanie and Council members Malinda Andrews, Bruce Fredericks, Rosa Honani, Lamar Keevama and Wallace Youvella. The Hopi Tribe’s Land Commission include Chairman Lamar Keevama and Council members LeRoy Shingoitewa, Annette Talayumtewa, Dale Siquah, and Antone Honanie. The Hopi team was assisted by Hopi Water Resource Program Director Lionel Puhuyesva and other tribal staff, and tribal attorneys.

The Hopi Tribe also is reaching out to potentially-competing claimants in the Little Colorado River adjudication in an effort to coordinate their water supply efforts, including the Navajo Nation and the cities of Flagstaff and Winslow. “We are interested in regional solutions to a variety of water rights issues,” explained Tribal Chairman Herman Honanie. “We are looking for ways to work together to bring to Northeast Arizona its fair share of the region’s water resources,” noted Chairman Honanie. To that end, Hopi Tribal Council members are meeting regularly with a water team appointed by the Navajo Nation to reconcile competing positions on water settlement issues. Both tribes have agreed to move forward with negotiations, as “Two Nations, One Voice.” Discussions between the two tribes are ongoing.

The Hopi Tribe holds time immemorial water rights, meaning that they are senior to all other claims to the Colorado River, the Little Colorado River, and on-reservation washes, springs, and groundwater. “For too long, our water rights claims have sat dormant, while our water is used by others. We want wet water for our people, not just the paper water rights we have claimed for so long,” explained Water and Energy Team Chairman Norman Honanie.

The Hopi Tribe is a party to the long-running Little Colorado River 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.

Recently, federal and state elected officials contacted the tribes to request their participation in water negotiations. Their request resulted in a meeting on March 30, 2016, including Governor Douglas A. Ducey and Senators John S. McCain and Jeff Flake. On March 25, 2016, both tribes wrote a joint letter informing the state parties that they would agree to meet, but not until they met together. Another meeting may take place later this summer.

###