



# 25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Tribal leaders present united voice in support of water rights**



**Prior to the Senate hearing, Navajo Nation Speaker Crystalyne Curley, President Dr. Buu Nygren, and other tribal leaders met with U.S. Senators to discuss the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement.**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – 25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren were joined by leaders of the Southern San Juan Paiute Tribe in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, as they led a unified call for congressional support of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement.

U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ) introduced the settlement through S. 4633, which was heard by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

President Nygren provided testimony during the Senate hearing in support of the bill, along with Hopi Tribal Chairman Timothy Nuvangyaoma and San Juan Southern Paiute Vice President Johnny Lehi, Jr. — both tribes are parties to the proposed settlement.

The testimony also conveyed the Navajo Nation's support for S. 4998, a bill to approve the settlement of water rights claims of the Navajo Nation in the Rio San Jose Stream System in the State of New Mexico, and for other purposes.

S. 4998 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to execute, on behalf of the United States, a settlement agreement to quantify the Nation's water rights in the Rio San José Basin, ending four decades of litigation over that basin, and recognize water rights in the Rio Puerco Basin as well. The Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved the Navajo Nation Rio San José Settlement Agreement on May 23.

Prior to the hearing, the tribal leaders met with Sens. Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ), and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) to discuss the Senate bill.

"The Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and San Juan Southern Paiute are unified and we are speaking with one voice in support of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Agreement. Many of my colleagues of the 25th Navajo Nation Council demonstrated their commitment to negotiating this settlement and we are eager to continue moving it forward with support of congress," said Speaker Curley.

For the Navajo Nation, the key terms of the settlement include 44,700-acre feet per year (AFY) of the Arizona allocation of Upper Basin Colorado – representing 90-percent of Arizona's Upper Basin allocation, 3,600 AFY of fourth priority Lower Basin Colorado River Water, all the Little Colorado River water that reaches the Navajo Nation, all the Navajo aquifer that underlies the Navajo Nation, and all Coconino Aquifer that underlies the Navajo Nation.

In discussions with key congressional members, the tribal leaders emphasized the critical importance of securing their water resources to ensure the health, economic vitality, and cultural preservation of their communities.

The tribal leaders also outlined the significant challenges faced by their communities due to water scarcity, compounded by climate change and increased demand. They also continue to call on congressional members to support the companion bill in the House, H.R. 8940, which will guarantee access to clean and reliable water sources, as well as funding for infrastructure improvements necessary to deliver and manage the resources.

As the bills progress, the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Southern San Juan Paiute Tribe remain optimistic that their unified efforts will lead to passage in the House, Senate, and White House to secure a sustainable future for their respective communities.

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