



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation leaders urge Congress to pass water rights bills



Speaker Crystalyne Curley (right) and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren met with Representative Bruce Westerman (left) to convey their support for the Nation's Water Settlements that are currently before Congress.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Wednesday, 25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren led a unified call for congressional support of the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act, the Rio San José Stream System Water Rights Settlement Act, and the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project Amendments Act of 2023.

The two leaders met with U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and U.S. Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), who are the lead sponsors of the Arizona settlement, which will also settle water claims for the Hopi Tribe and the San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe. They also met with the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR), to convey the Navajo Nation's support.

In addition to the settlement in Arizona, the Navajo Nation continues to seek approval for S. 4998, 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 the Nation's water rights in the Rio Puerco Basin as well. Both settlements were approved by the Navajo Nation Council in May.

"The three tribes and other parties within Arizona are unified in support of the Settlement Agreement. For the Navajo Nation, these settlements are about securing the basic water needs of our people and our communities which are long overdue," said Speaker Curley.

For the Navajo Nation, the key terms of the Arizona 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 wash water that reaches the Navajo Nation (subject to shared management with the Hopi Tribe), all the Navajo aquifer that underlies the Navajo Nation (subject to a pumping limit and joint management with the Hopi Tribe), and all the Coconino Aquifer that underlies the Navajo Nation.

In discussions with Sen. Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM) on Wednesday, Speaker Curley thanked them for supporting S. 4998, which will quantify the Nation’s water rights in the Rio San José Stream System and the Rio Puerco Basin in New Mexico.

In addition, the Navajo Nation is pushing for the approval of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project Amendments Act of 2023, which will amend the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project to ensure it has the resources and time needed to reach completion to deliver drinking water to northwestern New Mexico communities within the Navajo Nation.

“With the pending transition in leadership at the federal level, this is a critical time to move these bills forward and across the finish line. Water is life and we need secured water resources to sustain the Navajo people for generations to come,” Speaker Curley stated.

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