



Joint Press Release

Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker and The Hopi Tribe



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Navajo Nation Council and Hopi Tribe commit to making progress with Little Colorado River negotiations

PHOENIX – Last Tuesday, members of the Navajo Nation Council and Vice President Jonathan Nez met with Hopi Tribal Chairman Herman G. Honanie and members of the Hopi Tribal Council to further discuss a proposed Little Colorado River settlement agreement.

During the meeting, members of both councils stated that they would remain committed to engaging in further discussions in order to reach an agreement that benefits both tribes and allows the tribes to present a unified voice when negotiating with non-Indian stakeholders at the state level.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) noted that the Navajo Nation Council has made water rights a top priority and cautioned that the longer it takes to reach a settlement, the more the tribes stand to lose in terms of the amount of water they are able to secure.

“Each day that we wait, that number changes,” said Speaker Bates.

Chairman Honanie and other Hopi Tribal Council members agreed with the need to move forward in a timely manner so that the process could proceed to the state level where the tribes would then begin negotiating with non-Indian stakeholders.

“We’re doing this for our children, for the generations who aren’t here yet,” stated Chairman Honanie, emphasizing the importance of securing water rights to sustain both tribes for generations to come.

Officials from both tribes have met on several occasions to begin developing the framework to guide the negotiations, however, Tuesday’s meeting marked the first time that members of the current Navajo Nation Council met directly with leadership from the Hopi Tribe on the matter.

In previous meetings, officials determined that the tribes would proceed with the “Two Nations, One Voice” concept, meaning that the Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Nation would develop terms of an agreement prior to beginning negotiations at the state level.

Chairman Honanie said “Two Nations, One Voice” is a great concept, adding that he feels optimistic that further discussions would lead to an agreement that benefits both tribes.

Speaker Bates on Thursday informed President Russell Begaye that legislation would be introduced to establish an official negotiating team for the Navajo Nation that will include members of the Navajo Nation Council. Speaker Bates also requested President Begaye to issue recommendations regarding the membership and establishment of the negotiating team.

Officials from both tribes are expected to meet once again to discuss specific terms of a proposed agreement. A Little Colorado River settlement agreement would require approvals from both tribal councils and Congress.

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