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Whipple, John J., OSE

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Subject: Navajo Editorial
Attachments:  2007-03-30 Response to Sullivan.pdf(2MB)

FYI, the NN's offering to the Albuquerque Journal is attached. We are prepared to have a letter from President Shirley announcing introduction of the legislation at the appropriate time.

SP

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**NAVAJO NATION
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COMMISSION**

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March 30, 2007

Dear Editor,

In April 2005, the Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico executed a settlement agreement to resolve a century-old controversy concerning water rights in the San Juan River basin that could have persisted for decades to come through long, protracted litigation. The state of New Mexico and the Navajo Nation spent years crafting a settlement that would protect existing uses from the San Juan River while ensuring that the Navajo Nation would receive a firm supply of drinking water to sustain the Navajo Reservation as a permanent homeland for the Navajo People. Under this agreement, the Navajo Nation agreed to limit its water rights to the San Juan River in exchange for the construction of much needed water infrastructure on the Navajo Reservation.

Concerns that the settlement would "dry up the river" are unfounded. The settlement is structured to ensure that the Navajo Nation's water rights fit within the water apportioned to the state of New Mexico by interstate compacts. Moreover, because the bulk of the water for the Navajo settlement would come from water stored at Navajo Reservoir, downstream water diversions are protected. Without a settlement, these diversions would be at substantial risk because of the water rights claims of the Navajo Nation. The city of Farmington, which has very junior rights relative to the Navajo Nation, has already endorsed the Navajo settlement.

The cities of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and others will be relying on water from the San Juan Chama Project to meet each of their future municipal water needs. The settlement provides security for these uses by resolving the Navajo Nation's water rights claims with certainty without diminishing the supply of water available for San Juan Chama diversions. The Navajo Nation and the San Juan Chama contractors, including the city of Albuquerque will be sharing waters from Navajo Reservoir. The Bureau of Reclamation has determined that sufficient water will be available to satisfy all of the demands placed on the San Juan River water by all of the water users.

The Navajo Nation appreciates the continued support of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation for this settlement. We anticipate that the delegation will introduce the Northwestern New Mexico Water Projects Act to implement the settlement and to authorize the construction of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. This project will provide a firm, sustainable supply of municipal water for the Navajo Reservation, the City of Gallup and the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Many of the 80,000 Navajo men, women, and children in project service area presently haul water for drinking and cooking. Although construction of the project will not necessarily eliminate all water hauling on the reservation, this project will allow the Indian Health Service to expand distribution systems to provide potable water delivery to more homes and would create growth corridors within the Navajo Nation where future communities can be built with ready access to roads, electricity and potable water.

The Bureau of Reclamation is scheduled to release a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Navajo-Gallup Project in March 30, 2007. Public hearings will be

scheduled to discuss the project. The Nation encourages everyone who is concerned to attend the public hearings.

The Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico have embarked on an ambitious undertaking to bring a sustainable supply of potable water to northwestern New Mexico as part of a water rights settlement that provides certainty, security, and protection for the water and the water uses within the San Juan River basin in New Mexico. The settlement is good for all Navajos and New Mexico residents who care about their water resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Gilmore', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Commissioner Ray Gilmore, Chair
Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission