

John Whipple

From: johnleeper
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2004 11:08 AM
To: utton
Cc: John Whipple
Subject: FWD: Legislature Wants "Everybody to the Table" in Navajo Water Settlement

----- Original Message -----
From: "Bernadette Tsosie" <bernadettetsosie@mail.navajo.org>
Reply-To: <bernadettetsosie@mail.navajo.org>
Date: Tue, 27 Jan 2004 09:53:38 -0700

----- Original Message -----
From: Kathy Helms <khelms@frontiernet.net>
Date: Tue, 27 Jan 2004 08:14:43 -0800

> Farmington Daily Times

Headlines A-1
 Panel: Include non-Natives
 Legislature Wants "Everybody to the Table" in Navajo Water Settlement

By Walter Rubel/Santa Fe Bureau Chief
 Jan 27, 2004, 10:46 am

SANTA FE < Senate Majority Floor Leader Manny Aragon, D-Albuquerque, introduced a joint memorial Monday that would instruct the state engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission to include 'non-Native stake holders' in the recent Navajo water settlement.

The settlement was announced Dec. 5, and is designed to adjudicate water rights for the Navajo Nation. It includes construction of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

Aragon said that unless everybody was included in the negotiations, it would only result in more legal problems down the road.

'I just think we should get everybody to the table,' Aragon said. 'It should be settled once and for all. If non-Natives are not included, all this will do is lead to more lawsuits.'

Sen. Leonard Tsosie, D-Crownpoint, objected to the statement that non-Natives were not involved in the negotiations < noting that those negotiating for the state were not Native Americans.

'Let's not misstate the record. When you say that non-Natives were not involved, it makes it sound like Natives had the upper hand,' Tsosie said. 'That's not true.'

But Republican Sens. Raymond Kysar and William Sharer of Farmington both said the settlement was rushed through without giving San Juan County communities an opportunity to participate.

John Whipple of the Interstate Stream Commission told that commission's board last month that they hoped to arrive at a 'set agreement' by mid-February..

Whipple said the commission was 'on a very aggressive schedule.' But many have complained that not enough time has been given to review the settlement

'What we're trying to do is look at the agreement, which was rushed through

because of the federal government,² Kysar said. ³None of the people in San Juan County < the county itself or the cities of Bloomfield, Farmington or Aztec < have had time to participate. All we're asking for here is time to take a look at the agreement.²

He said that 60 percent of the water that runs through New Mexico passes through San Juan County.

Sharer objected to a request by Tsosie to have the memorial heard by the Indian Affairs Committee. He said every issue the state deals with impacts American Indians and they can't all go through that committee.

³It's important that we don't muddy this by making it a racial issue,² Sharer said. ³This is about New Mexico water that belongs to all of us.²

Tsosie responded that he never brought up race and he resented the implication that he had. He said the issue is vital to those in the Navajo Nation and that a hearing in the Indian Affairs Committee would give Navajos an opportunity to attend and have their side heard.

The Senate agreed and the memorial will be sent to the Indian Affairs Committee first.

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