



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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INTERIOR SECRETARY LUJAN APPROVES HISTORIC AGREEMENT TO SETTLE INDIAN WATER CLAIMS IN IDAHO

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Luján today approved a proposed settlement of Indian water rights for the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho

"This agreement is significant in that it is the first Indian water rights settlement for the State and the Bush Administration," Lujan said. "It also can serve as a model for other Indian water rights negotiations in progress across the country. The 1990 Fort Hall Water Rights Agreement, achieved after five years of negotiations, is a victory for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, local non-Indian water users and the State of Idaho.

"I am especially pleased that the settlement was achieved without committing the Federal Government to any economically or environmentally unjustifiable water development projects," Lujan said. "Certain provisions of the agreement will benefit habitat of the endangered whooping crane and could enhance flows in the Snake River to improve salmon and steelhead fisheries

Lujan noted, however, that the agreement cannot become effective until further actions are completed in the state court, and approval by the Congress, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and the Idaho Legislature.

Under the agreement:

-- The Tribes and the United States will be decreed a firm water supply from surface and groundwater totalling 581,031 acre-feet per year;

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