Agreement Quantifies Rights of Tribe, Provides Drinking Water to Reservation Communities, and Helps Secure Water Supplies for Downstream Phoenix

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – As part of President Obama's commitment to empower tribal nations, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, on behalf of the United States, today signed an historic agreement at the Department of the Interior guaranteeing water rights for the White Mountain Apache Tribe of Arizona. The agreement will also provide funding for infrastructure to deliver clean drinking water to the Reservation, as well as water security for the City of Phoenix and other downstream water users.

Joining Secretary Jewell were White Mountain Apache Chairman Ronnie Lupe and officials from the Tribe and the State of Arizona, including Representative Ann Kirkpatrick and former Senator Jon Kyl. The Secretary's signature provides final Federal approval of the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Agreement, first authorized as part of the Claims Resolution Act of 2010.

The signing ceremony comes on the heels of the first meeting of the President's new White House Council on Native American Affairs, chaired by Secretary Jewell yesterday and attended by other Cabinet members and senior Administration officials.

"Today we are taking a key step in fulfilling the Administration's commitment to resolving water rights in a manner that benefits Indian tribes and provides certainty to water users," said Secretary Jewell. "Perhaps most importantly, the agreement paves the way to ensuring that the White Mountain Apache Tribe will have clean drinking water in communities across the Reservation for the next 100 years."

"On behalf of the White Mountain Apache Tribe, we thank Secretary Jewell, the Federal Negotiation Team, Governor Brewer, Salt River Project officials, the Phoenix Valley cities and irrigation districts, the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, Show Low, and our water rights team and attorney – with special thanks to former Senator Jon Kyl and Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick for helping us achieve a dignified and honorable quantification of our water rights," said Chairman Lupe, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Tribe.

The White Mountain Apache Reservation includes more than 1.6 million acres in the headwaters of the Salt River basin in Arizona. The agreement resolves the White Mountain Apache Tribe's claims to both the Gila and the Little Colorado Rivers in Arizona. The authorizing legislation includes substantial benefits for the Tribe, including funding of more than $200 million for the planning, design, construction, and operation and maintenance of the WMAT Rural Water System and an additional authorization for $78.5 million for a Settlement Fund for fish production, rehabilitation of recreational lakes, and other projects that will benefit the Tribe.

The rural drinking water system will extend from the town of Whiteriver in the east to the town of

Cibecue on the west side of the Reservation. In addition, the agreement acknowledges the Tribe's interest in and management of other valuable water and water-dependent resources on the Reservation such as lakes, springs and water- dependent fish and wildlife. This agreement establishes a firm foundation for improved irrigation water delivery on Reservation lands.

Today's agreement is significant to the City of Phoenix and surrounding municipalities because the Salt River Water Project is dependent on the Tribe's senior claims to the water.

"Reaching an agreement of this historic magnitude can only be accomplished through the collective and collaborative efforts of the state, tribe and local communities," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn. "I applaud the tribe's commitment to resolving this issue and I look forward to the tangible benefits it will deliver to the White Mountain Apache Nation, both in terms of health and the economy."

The agreement executed today is one of six Indian water agreements authorized since 2009 in legislation signed by President Obama, and one of four authorized in the Claims Resolution Act signed by President Obama on December 8, 2010.

The other three agreements authorized in the Claims Resolutions Act have been executed:

• On April 27, 2012, former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar executed the **Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement** in a signing ceremony at the Department of the Interior with Crow Chairman Cedric Black Eagle and Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer. This compact settles all of the Crow Tribe's claims to water in the State of Montana and provides funding for design and construction of a rural water system on the Crow Reservation and for rehabilitation and improvement of the Crow Irrigation Project, while also providing for administration and current and future use of water by all Indian and non-Indian water users on the Reservation.

• On July 11, 2012, Salazar executed three water contracts as part of implementation of the **Taos Pueblo Indian Water Rights Settlement**, which includes the Taos Pueblo, the State of New Mexico, the Town Of Taos, various non-Indian water users and the United States. Provisions relating to this settlement in the 2010 law resolve water rights disputes in the Rio Pueblo de Taos and Rio Hondo stream systems in New Mexico.

• On March 14, 2013, Salazar executed the **Aamodt Water Rights Settlement** provisions related to the Rio Pojoaque Basin north of Santa Fe, New Mexico which is the homeland of the Tesuque, Nambe, Pojoaque and San Ildefonso Pueblos. Secretary Salazar and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn joined leaders of the four tribes and New Mexico Governor Susanna Martinez at the Santa Fe Indian School to execute and celebrate the agreement. It provided finality to the Pueblos' water rights and certainty for non-Indian water rights in north central New Mexico.

Pictures from today's signing ceremony are available here.