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Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton has assured representatives of the Indian tribe that the Interior Department is committed to finding “a practicable way'' to deliver which the tribe is entitled as recognized in a 1965 agreement, involving construction of the Central Utah Project.

In a statement released in Washington today, Secretary Morton said the Department intends to carry out terms of the water agreement "with all possible dispatch," and that he has ordered the Bureau of Reclamation to expedite its feasibility report on phases of the Central Utah Project.

The statement came after a meeting Monday in Washington between Secretary Morton, other Interior officials, and representatives of the Ute Tribe including Homey J. Secakuku, Tribal Chairman; Francis Wyasket, member of the Tribal Council and former Chairman, and John Boyden of Salt Lake City, attorney.

The Indians had requested Secretary Morton to assure them that their water rights would be protected during the various phases of construction of the Central Utah Project, a multi-unit diversion project to supply water to growing population centers in Utah.

"I have conferred with the representatives of the Ute Indian Tribe in Washington, D.C., today," Secretary Morton said after the meeting in his office. "I want to confirm that the Department of the Interior is fully committed to finding a practicable way to deliver to the Ute Indian Tribe the water to which it is entitled under the Winters Doctrine as recognized in the Indian Deferral Agreement of 1965. We are going forward with this program with all possible dispatch.

"Without intending to modify my previous announcement concerning the Central Utah Project, I have directed the Bureau of Reclamation to complete on an expedited basis the Uintah Unit feasibility report, which includes an analysis of the Uintah and White Rocks reservoirs. Further, we shall continue the investigations of the ultimate phase of the Central Utah Project."

The statement today followed an announcement by the Department on November 8 that the Bureau of Reclamation will soon call for bids for construction of the Currant Creek Dam and Reservoir, features of the Bonneville Unit of the Central Utah Project. Secretary Morton promised then that the Department would refine and resolve issues dealing with the streamflows in the Uintah Basin and irrigation of Ute Tribe lands.

The Ute Tribe entered into a four-party agreement in 1965 with the

Central Utah Conservancy District, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Under that agreement the Ute Indians agreed to the deferment of the use of a certain amount of Indian water in return for recognition of rights to that water. The deferment continues until 2005, when either the ultimate phase of the Central Utah Project will be completed and the deferred water replaced, or "equitable adjustment" will be made.

In resolution October 2, 1973, the Indians called upon the Secretary "to reaffirm the commitments of

the United States, or to inform the Tribe as to how the United States could feasibly discharge its additional trust responsibility to assist the tribe in applying to beneficial use the water rights of the Tribe without the Central Utah Project as contemplated by said agreement."

This week's meeting was an outgrowth of the October 2 request and the November 8 Interior Department announcement.