



# YAVAPAI-APACHE NATION

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July 1, 2024

Honorable Raul Grijalva  
1203 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund – Amendment to Establish Subaccounts

Dear Congressman Grijalva:

On behalf of the Yavapai-Apache Nation, I write to express the Nation's wholehearted support for your proposed *Bill to establish subaccounts in the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund to satisfy the obligations of the United States with respect to certain Indian water rights settlements, and for other purposes.*

When individual Indian Tribes achieve settlement of their water rights claims, this is almost always the culmination of many years of litigation and settlement negotiations, sometimes encompassing decades. However, settlement of Indian water rights claims and approval of settlement agreements by Congress is only the beginning of what can be a long road to securing the full amount of Congressionally appropriated funding needed to implement the terms of the settlement agreement, including the construction, and ongoing operation, maintenance, and repair of the water infrastructure projects that are typically part of such settlement agreements. Securing the implementation and operational funds that are integral to the settlement itself is essential to the tribes realizing the benefit of the settlement bargain they have struck with the settling parties.

The importance of Congressionally appropriated Indian water rights settlement implementation funds cannot be overstated. In almost every instance, the ability of a water rights settling tribe to provide the socially and economically sustainable homeland that its people need to grow and prosper has been severely handicapped over many generations by the lack of a legally secure

water supply and the infrastructure needed to deliver that water to their communities. The ability of a tribe to provide its members basic necessities like housing, and the ability to develop an economy that provides jobs and the seeds of ongoing economic development, always hinges in large part on the ready availability of a secure water supply. Moreover, In many cases, an Indian water rights settlement benefits not only the settling tribe, but also provides inevitable collateral benefits to the off-reservation non-Indian communities within and near Indian Country. In a very real way, Indian water rights settlements and the resulting water infrastructure can be good for all communities within the area served by the settlement infrastructure. The social and economic benefits that flow to a tribe through its water rights settlement naturally spillover to benefit the tribe's neighbors. Therefore, building water settlement infrastructure and providing for its long-term operation, maintenance and repair, is critical to realizing the benefits of an Indian water rights settlement for all settling parties.

Your proposed Bill will begin to address the significant need in Indian Country for Congress to act expeditiously in all cases to provide the funding necessary to fully implement both existing Congressionally approved and future-approved Indian water rights settlement agreements for the benefit of the settling tribes and their regional communities.

For the reasons stated above, the Yavapai-Apache Nation unreservedly lends its support to your proposed Bill.

Sincerely,



Tanya Lewis,  
Chairwoman