



September 3, 2019

Dear Congress,

On behalf of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and the Western States Water Council (WSWC), we are writing to express our strong support for legislation securing future funding for tribal water rights settlements through a permanent extension of the transfer of dedicated revenues from the Reclamation Fund. Both the Senate and the House have introduced the Indian Water Rights Settlement Extension Act, which would amend section 10501 the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (43 U.S.C. 407).

The 2009 Act authorizes transfers from the Reclamation Fund to the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund (RWSF) for fiscal years 2020 through 2029, and withdrawals from the RWSF for negotiated water rights settlements that have been approved by congress, to build critical water infrastructure. These settlements and their related water infrastructure are vital to both tribal and non-tribal communities across the West, where water resources are scarce. They are also in the best interest of the American taxpayer, considering the federal trust obligations toward the tribes that have not been met, and the increasing costs of meeting those obligations as more time passes.

The Senate introduced S. 886, which has been amended and has passed out of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. The House has introduced H.R. 1904, and the Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on April 4, 2019. NARF and WSWC testified at that hearing in support of the bill. With our understanding of how legislation is scored, it is important that these two bills are reconciled and passed before the end of this fiscal year, to authorize the RWSF to continue receiving transfers from the Reclamation Fund after FY2029.

We strongly support negotiated settlements of disputed Indian reserved water rights claims as the best solution to a critical problem that affects almost all Western States. We encourage you to support a strong fiscal commitment to these settlements. We also urge you to support extending the current authorization to use revenues accruing to the Reclamation Fund for the Bureau of Reclamation to undertake project construction related to settlements. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Echohawk
NARF Executive Director

Kevin Allis
NCAI Chief Executive Officer

Tony Willardson
WSWC Executive Director