



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

SJ-17

Thomas C. Turney
New Mexico State Engineer
State of New Mexico
Office of the State Engineer
130 South Capitol
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

OCT 2 2002

Dear Mr. Turney:

As Chairperson of the Department's Working Group on Indian Water Settlements, I am pleased to inform you that the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office has officially appointed members to the Navajo-San Juan River Federal Indian Water Rights Negotiation Team. These appointments come in response to the requests made by both the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico that the Department appoint a formal negotiating team to assist in resolving the Navajo Nation's water rights claims in the San Juan River basin.

Michael Schoessler in the Department's Southwest Regional Solicitor's Office will serve as chairman of the federal team. Other team members include: John Cawley, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Brian Parry, Bureau of Reclamation; Dr. Joy Nicholopolous, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Brad Bridgewater, U.S. Department of Justice. These members originally served on the assessment-level team and recommended establishing a more formal federal negotiating team to participate in these important matters.

The Department remains committed to seeking the resolution of Indian water rights issues whenever possible through negotiated settlements rather than costly and time-consuming litigation. With this appointment, the federal team will join an already productive dialogue between the Navajo Nation and the State and will ideally improve the prospects for resolving these important water resource issues in the San Juan River basin through successful settlement.

If you have any questions about the federal team, please contact Scott Bergstrom, Deputy Director of the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office, at (202) 208-1442.

Sincerely,

Sue Ellen Wooldridge
Deputy Chief of Staff
and Counselor to the Secretary