



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

November 10, 2021

Memorandum

To: All Team Chairs and Members

From: Pamela Williams, Director, Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office

Subject: Policy Regarding Press Relations, Contact with Congressional Staff, and Other Departmental Communications Concerning Indian Water Settlements

The Federal negotiation and implementation teams are at the forefront of the United States' efforts to settle longstanding Indian water claims through the negotiation process. It's essential that the Department of the Interior maintain uniform positions and otherwise speak with one voice at the various stages of the Indian water settlement process. Policies concerning coordination of Departmental communications have been in place for several years and are being consolidated, updated, and reissued in this memorandum for your convenience.

- 1) If a team member is contacted by a member of the press with respect to an Indian water rights settlement, please contact both the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office ("SIWRO") and your bureau public affairs office prior to answering any questions or providing information. The team's Solicitor representative should also be contacted due to the fact that many negotiations are governed by confidentiality agreements. Please note that the term "member of the press" includes, but is not limited to, all media or agencies that print, broadcast, gather, and transmit news. Persons affiliated with newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and other electronic media are expressly included within the meaning of the term. Please contact SIWRO if there is any ambiguity or uncertainty.

- 2) All inquiries made by, or contacts with, members of congressional staff or others purportedly on behalf of a member of Congress should be referred to SIWRO. The Office will coordinate with the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs and the team as appropriate to assure that there is a prompt and accurate response to all congressional inquiries and contacts.
- 3) If a team member is contacted by a member of the public or an entity that is not a party to the negotiations regarding an Indian water settlement matter, please contact SIWRO. The objective is, to the extent possible, ensure appropriate confidentiality and that the Department voices one position.
- 4) No commitments or assurances of any kind should be made to an outside party regarding an Indian water settlement matter without first discussing the matter with the appropriate SIWRO staff.
- 5) In the event that a discussion regarding an Indian water settlement matter occurs in a manner that is spontaneous and where it is not practically possible to notify SIWRO in advance, please be cognizant of the underlying purposes for each of the aforementioned items and contact SIWRO immediately afterward.