

EPA Region 9 Honors Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians

Dean Mike, Chairman of the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, received an EPA Region 9 Environmental Award in recognition of his tribe's efforts to protect and preserve the environment in the year 2001. The EPA Region 9 Environmental Awards program acknowledges commitment and significant contributions to the environment in California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Guam and tribal lands.

The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians received their award for their continued development of a state-accredited environmental laboratory that provides a much-needed service to tribes throughout Southern California and beyond. The lab, which has separate departments for microbiology, organic and inorganic chemistry and pesticides analysis, includes an aggressive quality assurance program to ensure accuracy and integrity. The tribe has signed a resolution designating all funds received from laboratory analysis to be redirected back to the environmental program for further development and implementation of the tribe's environmental programs.

Under EPA Environmental Coordinator Marshall Cheung's leadership, the Twenty Nine Palms Laboratory has become a model facility.

Visit <http://www.epa.gov/Region9/awards/01/local.html> for more information on the EPA awards.

Navajo Nation DWR Water Management Branch Performs Multiple Functions

*Michael Foley – Navajo Nation Water
Management Branch*

The Navajo Nation's Water Management Branch is part of the Department of Water Resources, a unit of the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government. Legislative oversight of the Branch is performed by the Resources Committee of

the Navajo Nation Council. The Branch performs technical, advisory, and administrative functions related to issues of water rights, water supply, water quality, and water management. The Branch's four main sections include: Water Information Management, Geohydrology, Hydrometeorology, and Water Rights.

Water Information Management: The Water Information Management Section serves as the central repository for all water-related information on the Navajo Nation, including hydrologic and water-use data. This section maintains databases for water wells, and is developing surface water and water quality databases. The section maintains a geographic information system that integrates hydrologic data with other geographic information and is used to provide maps and other data to interested parties.

Geohydrology: The Geohydrology Section performs geohydrologic data gathering and analysis, including quarterly water-level monitoring at wells across the reservation. This section also provides technical support in water rights issues. The Special Studies group within this section provides technical support in the maintenance of hydrologic databases and conducts miscellaneous hydrogeologic studies.

Hydrometeorology: The Hydrometeorology Section collects climatic, precipitation, snowpack, streamflow, limnologic, and hydrographic survey data across the Navajo Nation. Limited water-quality data are also collected, and long-term surface water monitoring programs are being developed.

Water Rights: The Water Rights Section provides technical support for water rights adjudications, including analyses of water development scenarios for negotiated water rights settlements. Section engineers review plans and specifications for surface water works such as large-scale diversions, municipal water supply systems, and irrigation works.

Current Activities: Engineering and hydrologic analyses in support of active water rights negotiations in the Little Colorado River Basin in Arizona and the San Juan River Basin in New Mexico are top priority for the Water Management Branch. Negotiations with the State of New Mexico regarding a San Juan River water rights settlement have reached a serious stage and are expected to continue after a new governor is elected in November.

Little Colorado River water rights negotiations were near a settlement until a suit by the Navajo Nation against some of the parties derailed the process. The effort to reach a settlement was further complicated by Arizona Senator John Kyle's success in authorizing a Congressional review of value to the United States of the potential components of a Navajo Little Colorado River water rights settlement.

The Environmental Impact Statement for the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project is scheduled to be completed in 2003. The project will convey San Juan River water to the Navajo capital at Window Rock in northeastern Arizona as well as Navajo communities and the City of Gallup in northwest New Mexico. Major problems concerning the Navajo water rights settlement in New Mexico, and interbasin and interstate water transfers, must be answered before the Project can bring water to this area where communities are currently served by diminishing and/or unreliable groundwater sources.

Local waterlines need to be constructed or improved to deliver water to Navajo homes and businesses. The Water Management Branch is cooperating with the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to develop engineering studies on regional waterline needs. Reclamation is currently assisting the Branch on a waterline project for Lechee Chapter in cooperation with the City of Page and a water supply project to meet the needs of the isolated community of Navajo Mountain.

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