

April 2, 2009

Ad Hoc Group on Indian Water Rights

WESTERN BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

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WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS FUND

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WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

Creekview Plaza, Suite A-201
942 East North Union Avenue
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Phone: 801-561-5300
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The Honorable Ken Salazar
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

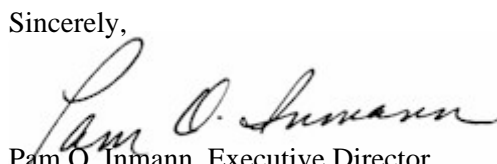
Dear Secretary Salazar:

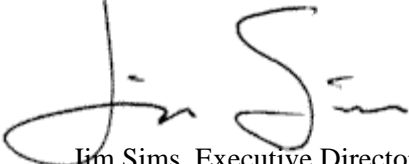
As members of the Ad Hoc Group on Indian Water Rights, we want to thank you for your support of negotiated Indian water right settlements. Over the past 25 years, more than 20 settlements of Indian land and water rights have been reached in eight Western states. These settlements have helped to save untold millions of dollars of public and private monies through avoidance of prolonged and costly litigation. A key component of this success has been the Administration's efforts to establish and maintain negotiation teams for both achieving and implementing settlements.

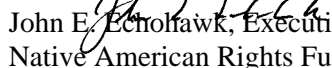
Unfortunately, we understand that the current level of funding for these negotiation teams is inadequate to meet the needs. Consistent with the trust responsibility of the United States to the tribes, we urge you to provide the necessary funding in future budgets. Adequate funding will facilitate increased tribal participation which could significantly advance our mutual goal of achieving water rights settlements. We believe there is strong bipartisan support in the Congress for this goal.


The federal trust responsibility requires that the programs of the Department of Interior that support these settlement discussions be adequately funded. As members of the Ad Hoc Group, we are committed to support steps to facilitate negotiated settlements. Like you, we believe that providing adequate funding for this purpose is an important obligation of the United States. Thank you again.

Sincerely,


Pam O. Inmann, Executive Director
Western Governors' Association


Jim Sims, Executive Director
Western Business Roundtable


John E. Echolfaw, Executive Director
Native American Rights Fund


Craig Bell, Executive Director
Western States Water Council

cc: appropriate members of Congress