

# *THE CHALLENGES OF NEGOTIATING TRIBAL WATER SETTLEMENTS IN TODAY'S "CLIMATE"*

**INDIGENOUS  
PERSPECTIVES  
ON SUSTAINABLE  
WATER PRACTICES**

Water Resources Research Center Annual Conference  
Hosted in Partnership with the Gila River Indian Community



[wrrc.arizona.edu](http://wrrc.arizona.edu)

**June 9-10, 2015**  
Wild Horse Pass  
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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS HEARING

## *“ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF NATIVE COMMUNITIES THROUGH INDIAN WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENTS”*

### MAY 20, 2015

- *Today, implementing existing settlements and reaching new agreements is more important than ever given the need for water on many Indian reservations and throughout the West and the uncertainty regarding its availability due to drought, climate change, and increasing demands for this scarce resource.*
- *With drought, climate change, increasing populations, and other factors impacting the availability of water and increasing competition for this finite resource, the number of requests for appointment of new negotiation teams continues to grow.*
- *In exchange for settlement benefits, tribes can and do agree to subordinate use of their water rights so that existing water uses can continue without impairment...Moreover, settlements provide mechanisms that can protect current uses by non-Indian water rights holders.*

**Testimony of Michael L. Connor, Deputy Secretary, Dept. of Interior**

# QUESTIONS FOR PANELISTS

- What was the biggest challenge you faced in negotiating a tribal settlement?
- What are some of the new challenges you are seeing in negotiating tribal settlements?
- Are there any developments in society, law, politics or policy that you think will be helpful in making future settlements possible?
- What other things would you like to see to help facilitate settlements?