



CITY OF ESPAÑOLA

"The Heart of Northern New Mexico...Where Cultures Unite"

June 7, 2024

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Peggy Sue Martinez
Mayor Pro Tem

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Samuel Z. LeDoux

Municipal Judge

Joseph W. Madrid

Executive Staff

City Manager

Eric J. Luján

405 N. Paseo de Oñate
Española, NM 87532
505-747-6100 (Main)
505-747-6084 (Fax)
www.cityofespanola.org

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez
United States Representative (D)
3rd Congressional District - New Mexico
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Representative Leger Fernandez:

The purpose of this letter is to convey the City of Española's support for the Ohkay Owingeh Water Rights Settlement Act of 2024. Española approved the Local Settlement Agreement for the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh's Rio Chama water rights in July of 2023. That followed several years of negotiations in which the settling parties - - including Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, the State of New Mexico, Española and multiple Rio Chama acequias - - reached an agreement on water rights of the Pueblo and non-Pueblos in the Rio Chama Stream System as well as on water projects to enhance their water uses. This settlement eliminates long and costly litigation with uncertain outcomes. Funding to be received by Española under the agreement will provide the City with additional wells to protect the City's long-term water security. The settlement also provides protection from challenges by others in the Chama Stream System to the City's water rights.

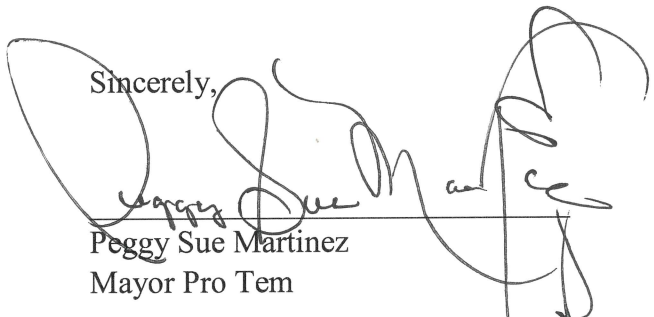
As a center of social and commercial activity in the Española Valley, the City of Española has a vital interest in providing a reliable, safe and sustainable water supply to meet the needs of the community. Water is a scarce and valuable resource that requires protection and needs to be used in a manner that recognizes the unique historic, social, cultural, demographic and geographic characteristics of both Pueblo and non-Pueblo water users. Water resources are being affected by climate change and the drought conditions that face the Southwest. It is vitally important that this resource be used to the extent possible to satisfy the rights recognized by the parties in the settlement. The successful resolution of the settlement is highly desirable and, after years of negotiations, achieves a final determination of the claims of Ohkay Owingeh on the Rio Chama Stream System. Implementation of the settlement agreement, as provided for by the Settlement Act, will help to ensure a sustainable supply of water to meet the needs of the residents of Española and the entire Española Valley.

The Aragon water rights adjudication was originally filed in 1969 to resolve water right claims on the Rio Chama. The negotiated settlement facilitates greater reliability of supply and greater certainty of water use. Funding provided for under the settlement provides for employment opportunities and other direct economic benefits to the parties

and to the businesses and companies in the State of New Mexico. The settlement will support jobs on the Pueblo and in the neighboring communities, including Española, bringing in needed revenues to improve the lives of the people within the Rio Chama Stream System.

The Local Settlement Agreement for Ohkay Owingeh's Rio Chama water rights is the result of the tireless efforts of the settling parties to negotiate a settlement that is in the best interest of all of the parties. The City of Española fully supports the passage of the Ohkay Owingeh Water Rights Settlement Act of 2024.

Sincerely,



Peggy Sue Martinez
Mayor Pro Tem