

REMARKS FOR NGS LISTENING SESSION

Gila River
Indian Comm.

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon on behalf of the Gila River Indian Community.
- The Community would first like to thank the representatives from the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation for traveling to Arizona for this listening tour in an effort to reach a solution on NGS.
- The Community has been heavily involved in the discussions over the past several months on this very important issue.
- With 311,000 acre-feet of CAP water entitlement, the Community is the largest entitlement holder of CAP water in the state – whether tribal or non-tribal. As a result, we have a very large interest in what happens at NGS.
- For the Community, energy from NGS is the primary source of power for the pumping of CAP water that the Community is entitled to under federal law. This water is a trust resource, and the United States has a trust responsibility to the Community to protect our water deliveries.
- The United States also has a trust responsibility to ensure that the potential shortfalls in revenue to the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund are addressed to ensure that additional costs are not passed on to CAP water tribes, and to manage the Development Fund to make sure that returns are maximized and disbursements are appropriate. This must be part of any NGS solution.
- The United States must recognize that keeping NGS operating will cause CAP water tribes like the Community to pay more for their water deliveries for the next two years; and as the largest CAP water entitlement holder, that additional cost burden will weigh most heavily on the Community.

- And while it is not surprising that energy costs will be less with natural gas, the real unknown is how the Development Fund will be affected by an NGS closure. We look forward to reviewing Reclamation's economic impacts analysis regarding the Development Fund, and hearing from Reclamation as to how it will address Development Fund shortfalls in the absence of excess revenue from the sale of NGS power.
- While it is necessary to acknowledge these impacts on CAP water tribes, the Community recognizes that all NGS stakeholders are going to need to make some sacrifices.
- And as an Arizona tribe, we cannot turn a blind eye towards the impacts that an NGS shut-down would have on the Navajo Nation and especially the Hopi Tribe. And these impacts would be greater, and felt even sooner, if NGS closes immediately.
- We are committed to working together to figure out how we can help to off-set these impacts on our sister tribes, and we will remain open to the possibility of NGS continuing to operate until December 2019, even though this may require CAP water tribes like the Community to pay more for their water.
- In return, we are looking for a commitment from the United States to work to come up with a solution that could address the impacts to the CAP water tribes and rehabilitate the health of the development fund, while protecting the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe.
- And we recognize, and are willing to accept, that a solution may have to be outside of the NGS process. This is precisely the approach that we used in reaching the TWG Agreement, where again, we were one of the critical players because we were the largest entitlement holder in the state. We look forward to helping the Department craft that solution.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.