

## Media Advisory

### U.S. and Tribal Leaders to Celebrate Soboba of Luiseño Indians Water Rights Settlement Act Tomorrow

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**SAN JACINTO, Calif.**—On Wednesday, Jan. 11, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Anne Castle, Counselor to the Deputy Secretary Letty Belin and other U.S. officials will join tribal leaders including Scott Cozart, Chairman of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, for a ceremony in San Jacinto, Calif., to celebrate conclusion of an historic U.S.-tribal water rights settlement.

Federal funding recently released under the Soboba of Luiseño Indians Settlement Act marked the final step in the historic water rights settlement and fulfilled promises made to the Soboba Band and southern California communities when the Act was approved by Congress in 2008.

"This settlement, as with other recent Indian water settlements, demonstrates President Obama's commitment to settling longstanding Indian claims, but also shows the attention this administration lends to non-Indian stakeholders as well in order to move forward in creating jobs and stimulating economic development for all," said Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk.

"This will be an historic day," said Assistant Secretary Castle. "The settlement resolved almost 60 years of litigation and more than a decade of negotiations over contentious questions of liability and ownership of water rights. It ensures not only the future of the Soboba Indians but also the future of the region's water supply for all of the valley's inhabitants."

"The Tribe is elated that this long-running issue has finally been resolved and that it is clearly a win-win for all," said Soboba Tribal Council Chairman Scott Cozart. Thanks to collaboration among the Band, the water districts and the U.S. government, the settlement is widely expected to have a lasting impact when it comes to a secure water supply and spurring economic development for the Soboba Band and the neighboring communities.

Disputes and litigation over the water resources date back to the late 1800's with multiple non-Indian water diversion from the San Jacinto River and the construction into the 1930's of the San Jacinto tunnel, a component of the Colorado River Aqueduct that transports water from the Colorado River to southern California. Years of growth in the region – now home to more than 18.5 million Californians – drastically affected groundwater supplies relied upon both by the Band and the local communities of Hemet and San Jacinto.

**WHO:** Larry Echo Hawk, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs  
Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science  
Counselor to the Deputy Secretary Letty Belin  
Scott Cozart, Chairman, Soboba Band  
Jeff Kightlinger, General Manager, Metropolitan Water District  
Randy Record, Director, Eastern Municipal Water District  
Thomas Wagoner, Lake Hemet Water District  
Representatives Joe Baca and Grace Napolitano

**WHAT:** Soboba Water Settlement Ceremony

**WHEN:** Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2012  
11:00 a.m.

**WHERE:** Country Club at Soboba Springs  
1020 Soboba Road  
San Jacinto, Calif 92583

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