



BLACKFEET NATION

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Blackfeet Water Compact and Settlement Act

Many people attended six community gatherings throughout the Reservation to learn more about the Blackfeet Water Compact and Settlement Act. The Tribe was asked a lot of great questions. Here are some of the more frequently asked ones.

Why is the Tribe having this vote now?

In December 2016, the Blackfeet Water Compact was approved by the U.S. Congress through the Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act. Now, after approval from Montana and the United States, it is up to Blackfeet tribal members to vote whether to approve or reject the Water Compact and Settlement Act. The Court has stayed the litigation of the Tribe's water rights pending approval of the Compact. If the Compact is not approved, the Court will lift the stay and the Tribe's water rights will be determined by the Montana Water Court.

What happens if tribal members reject the Water Compact and Settlement Act?

If tribal members vote "no" on their ballots, the water agreement between the Tribe, Montana, and United States will not be implemented and the Tribe will not receive any funding from the State or United States. The Tribe's water rights will then be litigated in the Montana Water Court where only the quantity and priority date of the Tribe's water will be determined, but claims for money damages cannot be brought.

Does the Blackfeet Nation have water rights?

The Tribe has reserved water rights (or Winters rights) that were reserved by treaty in 1855. Water was reserved by the Tribe to fulfill the homeland purpose of the Blackfeet Reservation, including irrigation, stock water, domestic, commercial, industrial and municipal uses, fish and wildlife, cultural uses and other uses necessary to provide a homeland for the Blackfeet People.

If the Tribe already has water rights, why would the Tribe negotiate a water compact?

While the Tribe has water rights, the amount (and control) of that water has never been determined. Blackfeet recognized it could obtain more water and significantly greater benefits through a water compact.

[MORE QUESTIONS ON BACK](#) →

How will Blackfeet benefit from the Water Compact?

The Tribe will have a reliable, long-term water supply that can be used for the following purposes:

- Domestic and commercial
- Industrial and municipal
- Farming and stock
- Wildlife habitat and cultural
- Other uses of water may be determined by the Tribe, as appropriate

Water that is not used by the Tribe can also be leased or marketed to others on and off the Reservation.

What other benefits will the Tribe receive from the Water Compact?

The Blackfeet Water Compact and Settlement Act will provide \$471 million in state and federal funding for water related projects, which will create job opportunities on the Reservation. An economic analysis completed by the U.S. Department of Interior projects up to 500 short-term jobs (over the next five years) and up to 200 long-term jobs (over the next 20-50 years) across the Reservation. Water related projects will include:

- Community water systems
- New irrigation projects
- Improvements to existing irrigations projects
- Four Horns pipeline, dam safety and other improvements
- Recreational lake improvements
- Swiftcurrent environmental improvements and protection project
- Land and water acquisition
- Fishery development and management
- Water related energy development issues
- Tribal water planning, management and administration

The Tribe will also have the exclusive right to develop hydropower at certain federal facilities.

Does the Tribe's water right in the Water Compact include water for tribal members and allottees?

Yes. Water for all trust allotments and tribal member fee lands are part of the water right outlined in the Water Compact.

For more information:



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Department at 406-338-7522
with questions