



BLACKFEET NATION

Blackfeet Water Compact and Settlement Act: Chronology



The Blackfeet Water Compact is the culmination of work that began nearly 40 years ago.

On April 20, tribal members will vote to determine the future of our water on the Reservation. The vote will approve or deny the Blackfeet Water Compact and the Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act.



1970s

- U.S. files federal court water rights cases for all Montana tribes
- State of Montana files a competing water rights adjudication in state court
- U.S. and tribes challenge Montana's jurisdiction over Indian water rights



1980s

- U.S. Supreme Court decides in 1984 that the state of Montana has the right to determine Indian water rights in state court
- Blackfeet continues to challenge state court jurisdiction
- Federal court decides in 1986 that state court has jurisdiction to decide Blackfeet water rights
- Tribe initiates water rights negotiations with the Montana Reserved Water Right Compact Commission



1990s

- Negotiations falter and state files a motion to begin litigation of Blackfeet water rights
- Negotiations begin again in 1992; Montana Water Court issues a stay of litigation
- Numerous public negotiation meetings and technical meetings between the Blackfeet Nation and state of Montana are held



(continued
on back)

2000s

- Montana Water Court Issues annual stays of litigation while negotiations proceed
- A water compact is completed in 2007
- Blackfeet Tribal Business Council authorizes water compact for approvals by the state of Montana, the United States and by Tribal member vote
- Montana Legislature ratifies the compact in 2009
- Water settlement legislation is introduced in 2010 to ratify the compact and to provide funding for water related projects and other purposes
- Water settlement legislation is reintroduced in 2011, 2013 and 2015
- Testimony in support of the settlement bills is provided before the Senate Indian Affairs Committee in 2010, 2011 and 2013; the U.S. testifies in opposition to the amount of federal funding and other issues
- Negotiations with the Department of the Interior to reach agreement on funding and other issues proceed through this period



2016

- The Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act is reported out of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee; the first settlement in five years to move forward in Congress
- United States Congress approves the Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act
- President Obama signs the Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act into law



2017

Tribal members will vote on April 20 to approve or deny the Water Compact and Settlement Act.

YES

NO

For more information:



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