

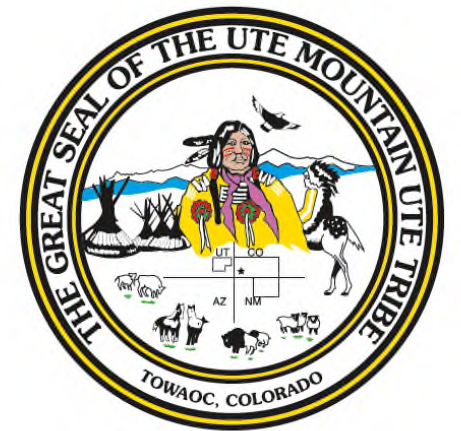
# Status of UMUT Water Rights and On-going Challenges

UMUT Water Resources Department Director  
Letisha Yazzie

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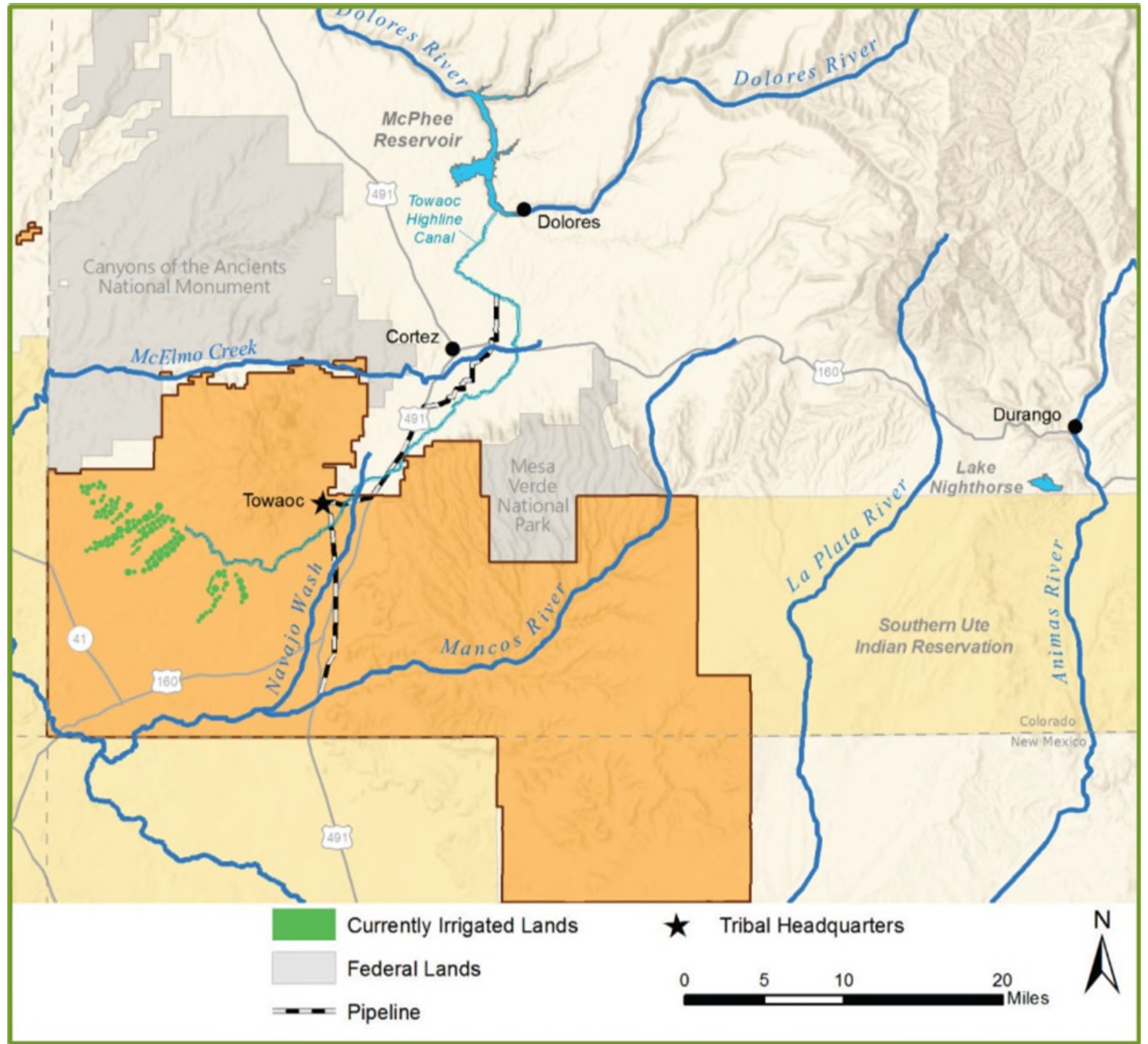
WATER AND AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023



# Overview of UMUT Water Resources

- Dolores Project/McPhee Reservoir
- Mancos River Reserved Water Rights
- San Juan River Reserved Water Rights
- Animas-La Plata Project/Lake Nighthorse
- Climate Action Plan



# Dolores Project is the Life Blood of the Tribal Water Rights

- In 1988, the Project brought drinking water to the Tribal members for the first time.
- The Project allowed the Tribe to be economically viable
  - Irrigation water is delivered to the Farm & Ranch to grow corn and feed to support the Bow and Arrow Corn Mill and the Bow and Arrow Cattle herd
  - Drinking water allowed the Tribe to build a Casino and Hotel
  - The enterprises that are supported by Project water employ 20 percent of the Tribal population



**Farm and Ranch  
“Before”**



**Farm and Ranch  
Now**



# Dolores Project Challenges

The Dolores Project is experiencing the impacts of Long-term Drought

- In 2021, the Tribe received only 10% of normal supply, and only 40% of normal supply in 2022
- The Tribe had to purchase hay to maintain a smaller Bow and Arrow cattle herd plus they had to purchase corn to keep their mill in reduced production
- They were able to negotiate some relief from operating costs with the USBR during the period when supplies were low, but the negotiations took over 2 years
- Fortunately, 2023 provided a full supply, allowing the Farm & Ranch to increase production





# Mancos Farm Water Right

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The Tribe has a reserved water right on the Mancos River

- This year they rehabilitated the diversion and ditch to deliver water to their Mancos Farm
- The reserved water right is subordinated, meaning it is a very junior right on the Mancos River

**The biggest challenge the Tribe faces with the Mancos Farm is the impacts of a junior water right on an over-appropriated river – which will likely keep this farm from achieving full production**

# San Juan River Water Right

The Tribe has a reserved water right on the San Juan River

- The right has yet to be developed
- The senior right is expected to be available even in extremely dry years
- The right will irrigate up to 640 acres, providing additional forage for the Bow & Arrow Cattel herd when the Dolores Project cannot deliver a full supply

**The biggest challenge the Tribe faces developing a San Juan River Farm is funding. They are in the process of applying for several grants to fund design and construction of the diversion, delivery system, and irrigation system.**



# Animas-La Plata Project

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Animas-La Plata Project provides future opportunities for the Tribe

- The Animas River watershed yields more water than the rivers flowing through the UMUT Reservation – the ALP is less vulnerable to drought than the Dolores Project
- The project authorization excluded irrigation
- The Tribe is diligently investigating uses for ALP water that will provide long-term economic benefit to the Tribe – the reserved nature of the water right allows time to make the right decisions
- The Tribe is open to exploring short-term uses for the water that will not place an undue burden to take on O&M costs

**The biggest challenge the Tribe faces negotiating a favorable agreement with the USBR on a repayment contract. All other Project participants had contracts by 2016.**



# NÚCHÍÚ

UTE MOUNTAIN UTE TRIBE  
CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



## UMUT is Adapting to Changing Climate

The Tribe's 2020 Climate Action Plan provides a roadmap for the next 20 years as part of the Tribe's contribution to address climate change – with specific goals for adapting to reduced water supply

*“The old people went by the weather. The climate has really changed. You expect heat in summer; winter is cold. That's how I grew up. Winter was long back then. The snow no longer comes in October. Sometimes, we don't have snow in December. It used to snow into April. A long time ago it used to rain a lot and we played in the mud. The frogs would come out of nowhere. We don't see that rain anymore.”*

*UMU Elder*