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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Gila River Indian Community Signs \$92 Million Agreement to Use New Infrastructure Funding to Help Complete the Gila River Indian Community's Water Settlement**

SACATON, AZ —Today, on behalf of the Gila River Indian Community, Governor Stephen Roe Lewis signed an Annual Funding Agreement, or AFA, with United States Bureau of Reclamation that provides nearly \$72 million of new funding to accelerate the construction of the Community's irrigation project that is part of its water settlement that was approved by Congress in 2004. The funding was made possible by the \$2.5 billion Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund that was included as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, commonly referred to as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law." The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was signed by President Biden on November 15, 2021.

"On behalf of the Community, I would like to thank Congressman O'Halleran, Congressman Gallego, Senator Sinema, Senator Kelly and President Biden for getting the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill passed and signed into law," said Governor Lewis. "This funding will help accelerate our irrigation project and help complete our water settlement. Because this funding supplements other funding available for settlements like ours, it will also secure the future of the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund, on which many Arizona tribes, including the Community, rely on to help cover the cost of delivering their CAP water."



Many of the Arizona tribal water settlements are funded through the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund, but tribes have been concerned there was not enough funds in the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund to meet at the United States' obligations to the Community and other tribes under congressionally approved water settlements. The \$2.5 billion Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund provides a separate appropriation to fund water infrastructure projects that were originally being funded through the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund. In addition to accelerating construction projects, this funding effectively preserves funds in the Lower Colorado River Basin Fund, which is a benefit to all Arizona tribes that receive CAP water delivery subsidies from the fund.

The Community began working with Reclamation even before the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Fund in order to be in a strong position to be able to take immediate advantage of this new funding. By accelerating its negotiation of this AFA, the Community will now have nearly \$72 million in funding above



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what was previously budgeted, allowing the Community to enter into construction contracts this year, creating hundreds of new construction jobs for the benefit of the Arizona economy.

Governor Lewis stated, "The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a game-changing law for all of Indian Country, our State, and ultimately, I suppose, the entire country. I felt it was incumbent on our Community to jump on this opportunity and ensure that we see the benefits here in Arizona as soon as possible. The new jobs

coming from the accelerated construction schedule made possible by this Act are just the tip of the iceberg and we will all see very quickly how this Act changes all of our lives in a positive way."

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*Gila River Indian Community, located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and home to the indigenous people of O'Otham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa). The people are known for their farms, deep traditions, basket weaving and pottery. The Tribe is comprised of seven districts, the administrative offices and departments are located in Sacaton, and serve the people throughout these seven community districts. 100% of its profits from gaming and 17 other Enterprises are utilized by the community providing services and opportunities to achieve the highest quality of life.*

