



**US Army Corps
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Albuquerque District

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Press Release # PA 08-06-03

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June 23, 2008

Cochiti Pueblo and Corps Sign Historic Agreement

By Bruce Hill, Jr., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District Public Affairs

COCHITI PUEBLO, N.M. - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District signed a historic cooperative agreement with Cochiti Pueblo that allows the Tribe to participate in managing the overall operations at the Cochiti Lake Area, Tuesday, June 17th.

The agreement, which excludes management of the federally operated dam, comes after many years of sacrifice by the Pueblo, including elements of its culture and agricultural way of life that were impacted to the point of being nearly lost after construction of the dam.

Built as a flood risk management dam by the Corps, Cochiti Dam was completed in 1975 and designed to reduce the effects of flooding for the City of Albuquerque, retain sediment and provide recreational opportunities. Constructed on Cochiti Pueblo land, including some of the Pueblo's best agricultural bottomland, nearly an entire generation did not have the same opportunities as their Tribal forefathers to practice farming, a focal point for the Pueblo's way of life and culture.

"Water seepage (from the dam) destroyed most of the farming land," said Joseph Henry Suina, Cochiti Pueblo Tribal Councilman. "A quarter of a century of farming and culture was lost, affecting an entire generation of children. We are

desperately trying to get back our way of life and teach our children to pass on our traditions."

"Together with the Corps, we can help each other out," he said.

The new agreement was signed by The Honorable John Paul Woodley, Jr., The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, The Honorable Joseph Ernest Suina, Cochiti Pueblo Governor, The Honorable Michael Pecos, Cochiti Pueblo Lt. Governor, and Lt. Colonel Bruce A. Estok, the Albuquerque District Commander for the Corps. An agreement that would not have been possible without the support of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation.

"When I first heard of the Pueblo's concerns, I recognized we are long overdue in acknowledging the sacrifice of Cochiti Pueblo that was against their will," said Woodley. "I am deeply touched and moved by the wisdom spoken by you here today."

"In 2007, Congress authorized the Corps to enter into Cooperative Agreements with Native American Tribes in New Mexico on whose lands Corps' flood control facilities are located," said Dr. Ron Kneebone, PhD, Corps of Engineers Tribal Liaison. "This includes Santa Ana and Santo Domingo Pueblos as well as the Pueblo de Cochiti. The purpose of the agreements is to establish a mechanism for paying the Tribes for activities they may carry out in support of Dam and Reservoir operations. "

"The benefit of such Cooperative Agreements is their recognition of the government-to-government relationship between the Federal agency and the Tribe," he said.

Over the past 12 years, the Corps has made a concerted effort to make amends with the Pueblo. Members of the Cochiti Pueblo who experienced the decline of their customs and practices are today welcoming the efforts of the Corps. Through collaborative decision making efforts with the Pueblo, the Corps will in-turn strive for win-win situations that allow the Corps to accomplish its public service mission of flood damage reduction while being responsible environmental stewards.

"I cannot express my thankfulness for the commitment the Albuquerque District has made," said Jacob Pecos, Director for the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at Cochiti Pueblo. "We look forward to a prosperous relationship."



Photo by Bruce Hill, Jr, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

From left to right, Hon. Michael Pecos, Cochiti Pueblo Lt. Governor, Hon. John Paul Woodley, Jr., Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Hon. Joseph Ernest Suina, Cochiti Pueblo Governor, and Lt. Colonel Bruce A. Estok, the Albuquerque District Commander for the Corps, sign a historic cooperative agreement that will allow Cochiti Pueblo to be more actively involved in Cochiti Lake operations.