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YAN, mayor lobby water in DC

By Steve Ayers
Staff Reporter

The Yavapai-Apache Nation and the Town of Camp Verde have had their share of differences over the years.

But recently a couple of issues have brought the two together -- both having to do with water.

Last week, in what can only be described as unprecedented, a contingent of leaders from the Nation and Mayor Tony Gioia pulled together for some mutual lobbying while they were all in Washington, D.C., on separate business.

The two issues of mutual interest are the Nation's request to form a negotiating team to settle their water rights claims on the Verde River and a request to have Fossil Creek and eventually

the upper Verde River designated as Wild & Scenic.

The Nation has been working on a water rights settlement for more than 30 years. Recently, they renewed their effort and have been lobbying their congressmen, senators and federal agency officials to assemble a federally appointed team to finalize their claims.

Last Tuesday, Tribal Chairman Thomas Beauty, Vice Chairman Norman Smith and former Chairman Vincent Randall met with the offices of four Arizona congressmen and both Arizona senators, John McCain and Jon Kyl, to plead their case.

Rep. Harry Mitchell was the only one who met with them personally.

See **LOBBY** on 5A



Yavapai-Apache
Chairman Thomas Beauty (center), Vice Chairman Norman Smith, former chairman Vincent Randall (seated) and tribal archaeologist Chris Coder were joined by Camp Verde Mayor Tony Gioia (in hat) while lobbying water issues in Washington, D.C.

Photo courtesy YAN

LOBBY

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"We were just basically letting them know what we were doing and giving them an update," Beauty said. "We also made them aware of our letters of support from Camp Verde and Clarkdale."

The Nation was requested to get letters of support from the Verde Valley communities before the Department of the Interior will allocate the funding for a negotiating team.

Beauty said he would be meeting with the Cottonwood City Council this week and the Nation has requested meetings with the Jerome Town Council and the Sedona City Council to gather their support.

On Wednesday, the Nation's representatives invited Gioia to join them in their lobbying effort to designate Fossil Creek and

possibly the upper Verde River as Wild & Scenic.

Beauty said their discussions with agency officials and congressmen on Fossil Creek were very positive.

"They kept telling us that the Wild & Scenic designation was one of the top priorities to get it going," Beauty said. "They also said there was talk of an immediate closure of Fossil Creek because of all the damage."

Fossil Creek was once home to many Apache people.

The Wild & Scenic designation would provide a level of federal protection to keep the rivers in "free-flowing condition to protect the water quality... and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes."

Since Arizona Public Service decommissioned the two power plants in Fossil Creek two years ago, the area has been



Photo Courtesy YAN

From left, Camp Verde Mayor Tony Gioia, Yavapai-Apache Vice Chairman Norman Smith, Congressman Harry Mitchell, Chairman Thomas Beauty and former Chairman Vincent Randall.

subjected to intense recreational use and little policing by the Forest Service.

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