CHEMEHUEVI INDIAN TRIBE

PUBLIC NOTICE
****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****
September 4, 2026

Federal Court Holds Havasu Water Company in Civil Contempt for Violating Order to Stop Using Tribal Land

The Chemehuevi Indian Tribe ("Tribe") is providing this update to Tribal Members and the Havasu Lake community regarding recent developments involving Havasu Water Company ("HWC").

On September 2, 2026, the federal court entered a Final Order finding that HWC violated the Court's prior order requiring HWC to stop operating on and using the Tribe's reservation trust lands. The Court held HWC in civil contempt. Civil contempt means that the Court found HWC disobeyed a clear court order and imposed a sanction intended to compel HWC to comply.

Beginning August 27, 2026, HWC must pay the Tribe $100 for each day it remains out of compliance. The payments must be made weekly in installments of $700. The fine will continue until HWC actually stops its unauthorized use of Tribal land. Paying the fine does not give HWC permission to continue operating, create an easement or other right to use Tribal land, or excuse HWC from complying with the Court's order.

To be clear: the fine is imposed on HWC, not its customers. The Court's order does not itself increase customer rates or authorize HWC to add the fine to customer bills. HWC may not unilaterally change the rates approved by the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") or impose a new surcharge. CPUC authorities generally treat penalties resulting from a utility's noncompliance as the responsibility of the utility or its owners, rather than its customers. The Tribe will monitor HWC's bills and regulatory filings and oppose any attempt to pass this contempt sanction on to customers.

The Court also ordered HWC to provide financial records so the Court can determine whether the amount of the daily fine should be changed. After HWC objected to the Tribe's proposed final order, the Court overruled HWC's objections. The Court found that HWC's objections were "virtually identical" to arguments the Court had already rejected and that HWC had misstated or misinterpreted what occurred at the August 27th hearing. In response to HWC's claim that it had already complied, the Court stated that it had found "the exact opposite"—HWC remained out of compliance.

The Court's findings also make clear where responsibility for this situation belongs. The Court found that "the issue of the customer's access to water was known to [HWC] since 2006" and that HWC had "more than ample time to attempt to find another means of (or location for) transporting

the water to its customers." More than three and a half years passed between the Court's ruling that HWC was trespassing and the ejectment order. The Court then allowed HWC an additional six months to comply. At the Tribe's request, HWC received a further 45-day transition period through July 30, 2026.

Despite all that additional time, HWC continued using Tribal land without legal authorization. HWC cannot now use the consequences of its own failure to secure lawful access or another means of serving its customers as justification for continuing to violate the Tribe's rights and the Court's orders.

The Tribe recognizes that HWC's customers are not responsible for HWC's conduct and understands their concerns about reliable water service. The Tribe has repeatedly demonstrated that concern by negotiating for years, requesting additional transition time, and working with governmental agencies toward a lawful solution. The Tribe is not responsible for operating HWC's private water company or bearing HWC's expenses, obligations, or liabilities.

The Court directed both parties to contact and cooperate with the CPUC and other relevant state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, regarding an alternative source of water and the possible appointment of a special master or neutral to address operation of the water system. The parties must also report on the status of any CPUC receivership process. They must report their progress to the Court by September 28, 2026, and appear for a status conference on October 1, 2026.

HWC's appeal remains pending before the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The Ninth Circuit previously denied HWC's request to suspend enforcement while the appeal proceeds. Accordingly, the federal court's orders remain in effect and HWC must comply unless a court orders otherwise.

The Tribe will continue acting lawfully, professionally, and compassionately. It remains committed to protecting its sovereignty and lands, enforcing the federal court's orders, and cooperating with responsible agencies toward a lawful and stable solution for the community.

Contact

For questions, Tribal Members may contact Tribal Administration.

Water customers should contact Havasu Water Company for billing questions, the California Public Utilities Commission for rate and service concerns, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for drinking water quality issues.

DANIEL LEIVAS, TRIBAL CHAIRMAN