



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES **Colorado River/Inflation Reduction Act/USBR**

On October 12, the Department of the Interior announced new drought mitigation funding opportunities to improve and protect the long-term sustainability of the Colorado River via a newly created Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program, funded with an initial allocation through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) managed by the Bureau of Reclamation. It will help increase water conservation, improve water efficiency, and prevent reservoirs from falling to critically low levels that would threaten water deliveries and power production.

“The prolonged drought afflicting the West is one of the most significant challenges facing our country. I have seen firsthand how climate change is exacerbating the drought crisis and putting pressure on the communities who live across Western landscapes,” said Secretary Deb Haaland. “Thanks to historic funding from the [IRA], the Interior Department is committed to using every resource available to conserve water and ensure that irrigators, Tribes and adjoining communities receive adequate assistance and support to build resilient communities and protect our water supplies.”

“This significant [IRA] investment...enables the Bureau of Reclamation to improve water management and conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin today – and for the future,” said Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton. “The Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program provides both new opportunities for system conservation and more durable long-term solutions for areas experiencing drought.”

The IRA included \$4 billion specifically for water management and conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin and other areas experiencing similar levels of drought. Near-term actions are focused on protecting the Colorado River in the Lower Basin. Interior is also working to invest in long-term system efficiency improvements across the basin, including at least \$500 million in the Upper Basin States of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming for additional water conservation for the entire system.

The newly created Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program will select projects for funding by Colorado River water delivery contract or entitlement holders that mitigate drought, protect important natural resources, and ensure a reliable source of water and power for those who live in communities across the West. The program funding opportunity has three components. Two of the three components are open for proposal submissions from Oct. 12 to Nov. 21, 2022 and require confirmation of water conservation and system benefits.

For the first component, eligible applicants may submit proposals for system conservation resulting in wet water remaining in Lake Mead at a set price for: a one-year agreement – \$330 per acre-foot; a two-year agreement – \$365 per acre-foot; and for a three-year agreement – \$400 per acre-foot. The second program component will accept proposals for additional water conservation and efficiency projects that could involve a variety of pricing options. The third component allows for proposals to be submitted in early 2023 for long-term system efficiency improvements that will result in multi-year system conservation. Information on the program and proposal submission details are available on Reclamation’s Inflation Reduction Act webpage. www.usbr.gov/inflation-reduction-act/

The news release reads: “As the Department implements this historic funding opportunity, it is focused on the need for continued collaboration and partnerships across the Upper and Lower Basins, with Tribes, and with the country of Mexico. The agency’s approach will continue to seek consensus support and will be based on a continued commitment to engage with diverse stakeholders to ensure all communities that rely on the Colorado River will provide contributions toward the solutions.” www.usbr.gov/newsroom/news-release/4353

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law/Drought Projects

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) allocated \$8.3 billion for Reclamation projects over the next five years to advance drought resilience and expand access to clean water for families, farmers, and wildlife. The investment will repair aging water delivery systems, secure dams, complete rural water projects, and protect aquatic ecosystems.

On October 17, Interior announced \$210 million in BIL funding, part of \$1.05 billion for Water Storage, Groundwater Storage and Conveyance Projects, to bring clean, reliable drinking water to communities across the West. The projects are expected to develop over 1.7 million acre-feet (maf) of additional water storage capacity, enough to support 6.8 million people for a year. The selected projects and feasibility studies are:

Arizona – Verde River Sediment Mitigation Study (\$5 million) to: provide the federal cost share for conducting the feasibility study to identify alternatives to restore at least 46,000 acre-feet of water storage lost due to accumulation of sediment at Horseshoe Reservoir; develop a plan for future management of sediment at Horseshoe and Bartlett Reservoirs; and investigate potential operational flexibilities created by any increased storage capacity in mitigating impacts of drought and climate change on water availability.

California – B.F. Sisk Dam Raise and Reservoir Expansion Project (\$25 million) for the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Authority associated with the B.F. Sisk Safety of Dams Modification Project, to develop approximately 130,000 acre-feet of additional storage, once completed.

The North of Delta Off-Stream Storage Sites Reservoir Project (\$30 million) capable to develop up to 1.5 maf of water in the Sacramento River located in the Coast Range mountains west of Maxwell, California. The reservoir would use new and existing facilities to move water into and out of the reservoir, with ultimate release to the Sacramento River via existing canals, a new pipeline near Dunnigan, and the Colusa Basin Drain.

The Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion (\$82 million) to efficiently integrate approximately 115,000 acre-feet of additional storage with new and existing conveyance facilities to allow Delta water supplies to be safely diverted, stored and delivered to beneficiaries.

Colorado – The Arkansas Valley Conduit (\$60 million) to continue the facilitation of supplying a safe, long-term water supply to an estimated 50,000 people in 40 rural communities along the Arkansas River. Once complete the project will move water through more than 230 miles of pipe designed to deliver up to about 7,500 acre-feet per year from Pueblo Reservoir to replace groundwater sources contaminated with radionuclides and help communities comply with Environmental Protection Act drinking water regulations.

Montana – Dry Redwater Regional Water System Feasibility Study (\$3 million) to provide the authorized federal cost-share for finishing the study.

Washington – Raising Cle Elum Dam (\$5 million), part of the Yakima Project, to increase the capacity by an

additional 14,600 acre-feet to be managed for instream flows for fish, and include shoreline protection that will provide mitigation for raising the pool.

“In the wake of severe drought across the West, the Department is putting funding from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to work to expand access to clean, reliable water and mitigate the impacts of this crisis,” said Secretary Haaland. www.usbr.gov/newsroom/news-release/4356

CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES **Colorado River Basin Conservation Act**

On October 11, Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-NM) introduced the Colorado River Basin Conservation Act (HR 9173) to amend Section 206 of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2015 (Public Law 113–235) to extend the Secretary of the Interior’s authority to fund or participate in pilot projects to increase Colorado River System water in Lake Mead and the initial units of Colorado River Storage Project reservoirs.

The bill renews the Secretary’s authority to make: (1) grants to public entities that use water from the Colorado River Basin for municipal purposes for projects implemented by one or more non-federal entities; or (2) grants or other appropriate financial agreements to provide additional funds for renewing or implementing water conservation agreements. The law specifically prohibited the use of funds in the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund or the Colorado River Development Fund for these grants. The Secretary is directed to submit a report to Congress evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot projects.

Jason Crow (D-CO); Diana DeGette (D-CO); Susie Lee (D-NV); Debbie Lesko (R-AZ); Joe Neguse (D-CO); and Dina Titus (D-NV) are cosponsors.

Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO) introduced identical legislation (S. 4579) on July 21, with Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), John Barrasso (R-WY) and Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) as cosponsors.

PEOPLE/IN MEMORY

Roland D. Westergard passed away peacefully on Sunday, October 23, at the age of 88. A WSWC member since 1967, Roland served as the Nevada State Engineer from 1967-1978, and then as Director of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources until 1990. Roland was a life-long advocate for the WSWC and state water resources management. He chaired the Council from July 1988 to July 1990. His passing marks the end of an era, as the last of many that participated in the formative years of the Council. We are grateful for our long association and will miss him! Family-only services are planned.

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