

May 13, 2026

The Honorable Mike Lee, Chair

The Honorable Martin Heinrich, Ranking Member

United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chair

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Ranking Member

United States House Committee on Natural Resources

cc: Members of the Colorado River Congressional Delegation

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members and Members of the Colorado River Delegation,

The undersigned groups from across the Colorado River Basin, including agricultural producers, water providers, conservation organizations, Tribal interests, local communities, businesses, and hydropower and infrastructure stakeholders, write to urge Congress to act decisively to provide targeted federal investment in the Colorado River Basin to ensure water, food, and energy security while sustaining rivers and natural systems for the communities and economies that rely on it. Water Year 2026 is unfolding as one of the most challenging hydrologic years in more than a century of recordkeeping, with exceptionally low snowpack and river runoff, and continued stress on an already depleted reservoir system. Difficult decisions around water supplies will be needed to address the severe shortages and operational risks that threaten the Basin and the stability of the entire system.

To immediately address the crisis facing the Colorado River Basin, we respectfully call on Congress to provide at least \$2 billion in new federal funding for a near-term drought mitigation program. Building on demand for the Bureau of Reclamation's existing drought mitigation investments to address immediate system stabilization needs, additional resources are urgently needed to sustain and scale these efforts in a manner that ensures the Basin will do more than simply endure from crisis to crisis. Water users, local communities, Tribal Nations, and conservation organizations are aligned on the need for immediate federal leadership and investment to address intensifying water supply challenges. We need strategic investments in a broad portfolio of tools – including conservation, efficiency, and smart, targeted augmentation to develop new water supply sources — as well as sustained support for engineered and natural infrastructure that supports the system and mitigates the growing drought impacts across the Basin.

A near-term drought mitigation program will need to provide additional resources and authorities beyond September 2026 to advance momentum on conservation and augmentation, improve system reliability and efficiencies, and build resilience against drought and wildfire under increasingly dire hydrologic conditions. Without this bridge, the Basin risks remaining in a repeated cycle of reactive, emergency-driven operations that are more disruptive, less effective, and more costly to Colorado River communities, economies, and ecosystems over time. New funding should include greater transparency to build trust, encourage participation at the scale necessary for meaningful impact, and provide opportunities for input from Basin states, Tribal Nations, water users, local communities, conservation organizations, hydropower customers and other affected stakeholders. Such investment represents a small fraction of the economic value generated by the Colorado River system and those who rely on it, yet it is critical to protecting that value and avoiding far greater costs associated with system instability.

Beyond the immediate needs, we also urge the establishment of a long-term federal funding mechanism dedicated to improving the water outlook through continued investment in conservation efforts to

stabilize the system, advancing innovation and new technologies, and—where appropriate—evaluating and advancing additional supply options. The challenges facing the Basin—drought, wildfire, hydrologic change, and limited water supplies—are structural and ongoing. They cannot be addressed through episodic or emergency appropriations alone. A durable, long-term federal framework can seed interest and leverage additional public and private investment to deliver sustained benefits at scale —helping keep agricultural producers viable, maintaining local economies and communities, ensuring water conservation is shared equitably across all sectors, and restoring the natural infrastructure that provide the water we all depend on and is the backbone of the Colorado River economy and beyond.

We are committed to being part of the solution. Delivering the scale of efficiency and innovation the Basin needs will require a strong partnership with the federal government, guidance from in-basin stakeholders, and dedicated funding streams that move beyond crisis management into sustained, on-the-ground implementation.

Thank you for your leadership and continued attention to the Colorado River Basin. We stand ready to work with you to improve our collective water security.

Sincerely,

Agribusiness and Water Council of Arizona
Aguila Irrigation District
Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority
American Rivers
Arizona Electrical District Number Seven
Arizona Electrical District Number Eight
Arizona Power Authority
Arizona Wildlife Federation
Association of California Water Agencies
Aurora Water
Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District
City of Española, New Mexico
Colorado Farm Bureau
Colorado River Energy Users Association
Colorado River Water Conservation District
Colorado Springs Utility
Colorado Water Congress
CSG West Colorado River Forum

Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart
New Mexico State Senate and Forum co-chair

Assemblymember Diane Papan
California State Assembly and Forum co-chair

Denver Water
Electrical District No. 3 of Pinal County, Arizona
Electrical District No. 4 of Pinal County, Arizona
El Prado Water and Sanitation District
Environmental Defense Fund
Family Farm Alliance
Farmers Conservation Alliance
Grand County, Colorado
Grand Valley Water Users Association
Harquahala Valley Power District
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors
Imperial Irrigation District

Irrigation and Electrical Districts of Arizona
Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians
Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage District
McMicken Irrigation District
McMullen Valley Water Conservation and Drainage District
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
National Audubon Society
Navajo Nation
Netafim Precision Agriculture, an Orbia Company
New Magma Irrigation and Drainage District
New Mexico Water Resources Association
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Northern Advisory Council to the Colorado River Authority of Utah
Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Water Quality/Quantity Committee
Orchard Mesa Irrigation District
Pacific Institute
Paloma Irrigation and Drainage District
Pueblo Water
Roosevelt Irrigation District
Rock Springs Grazing Association
Routt County, Colorado
San Carlos Irrigation and Drainage District
San Diego County Water Authority
San Juan Water Commission
Southeast Advisory Council to the Colorado River Authority of Utah
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Southwestern Water Conservation District
Sublette County Conservation District
Tonopah Irrigation District
The Nature Conservancy
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Twin Lakes Reservoir and Canal Company
Universal Access to Water for Tribal Communities
Ute Water Conservancy District
Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District
Western Growers Association
Western Landowners Alliance
Western Resource Advocates
Western States Ranches
Western States Water Council
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Yuma County Agricultural Water Coalition
Yuma Mesa Irrigation and Drainage District