



April 1, 2019

Dear Members of Congress,

We write today in strong support of the seven Colorado River Basin States Drought Contingency Plans (DCP). We support the ongoing work of the states as well as the federal “Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan Authorization Act” required to execute and implement those plans, which we understand will be introduced soon.

The DCPs are intended to incentivize water conservation while protecting existing water rights, recognizing the values of the Basin’s agricultural communities and respecting the need to protect its environmental resources. We appreciate that the DCPs establish processes that build on existing federal NEPA and ESA decisions.

From the headwaters to the Salton Sea and the delta, our groups have worked over the past two decades with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the seven Colorado River Basin states, and water providers and users throughout the Basin to find solutions that work for both people and nature. We believe the states are close to a final agreement and we steadfastly support their actions. Once the states finalize the DCPs, we will continue our efforts during DCP implementation, as we also work with all parties to improve conditions at the Salton Sea and across the basin.

The Colorado River provides water to approximately 40 million people and 5.5 million acres of irrigated agriculture in the Upper Basin (Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming) and the Lower Basin (Arizona, California and Nevada), as well as in Mexico. Since 2000, the Basin has experienced historically dry conditions and combined storage in Lakes Powell and Mead has reached its lowest level since Lake Powell initially began filling in the 1960s. Lakes Powell and Mead could reach critically low levels as early as 2021 if conditions do not significantly improve. Declining reservoirs threaten water supplies that are essential to the economy, environment, and health of the Southwestern United States.

Now is the time we all must work together for the sake of the future of the Basin. Therefore, it is critical that we support the goals of the DCP agreements in both basins and urge your support for these agreements through the “Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan Authorization Act.” We look forward to working with the States, the administration and the Congress on implementation of these historic agreements.

Sincerely,

Matt Rice, American Rivers

Kevin Moran, Environmental Defense Fund

Julie Hill-Gabriel, National Audubon Society

Taylor Hawes, The Nature Conservancy

Melinda Kassen Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Steve Moyer, Trout Unlimited

Bart Miller, Western Resource Advocates