

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 21, 2022

Camille Calimlim Touton
Commissioner
United States Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C St NW, Washington, DC 20240

Dear Commissioner Touton:

We write to you regarding the dire state of the Colorado River basin (the River), plagued by severe drought and heightened demand for water resources that do not exist. The River is the lifeblood of the American Southwest, with nearly 40 million people reliant on the water resources across seven states and 30 Tribes.

We appreciate the Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) continued emphasis on the urgency of achieving water use reductions and encourage continued discussion among basin States, Tribes, municipal and agricultural water users, Mexico, and the conservation community to find an agreement. It is our hope that responsible use and implementation of the \$4 billion from Section 50233 (Drought Mitigation in Reclamation States) of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will help alleviate some of the strains on the River system over the long term. Below are our priorities for implementation of the IRA's Section 50233 funding, reflecting the needs of our states in the Colorado River basin:

Resources need to flow through states, local governments, Tribes and public entities. We cannot underscore enough the need for the BOR to deliver money from the IRA in a manner that limits potential speculation or profiteering from those suffering from the consequences of drought. The funds made available through the IRA should be deployed through competitive programs designed to control price gouging and should be coordinated through state-approved or implemented programs and public entities like the Upper Colorado River Commission.

The BOR needs to direct resources towards permanent solutions on the River. In the middle of a 22-year drought with a hotter, drier future on the horizon, it is imperative for the BOR to focus efforts on a long-term strategy that includes funding opportunities for projects on both a temporary and long-term timeline. However, no matter the timeframe of a project, the BOR needs to fund efforts that provide real, meaningful long-term reductions in water use from the River.

The BOR needs to employ consistent measurement of system water losses in both basins of the River. Currently, the BOR only accounts for water evaporation in the Upper Basin. BOR funding should also be accompanied by system loss accounting in the Lower Basin. It is our hope that all projects funded by the BOR account for carryover for evaporation as soon as possible. This is consistent with the recent request by six of the seven basin States calling for BOR to account for system-based loss of the water.

The BOR should look to new or innovative methods for reducing water use that leverages federal funds in an effective and efficient manner. While using the existing channels for deployment of these new funds, the BOR should encourage spending funds in a manner that allows for new data, technology, or programs with the ultimate goal of reducing overall water use basin-wide. For example, the BOR might consider using a portion of the \$4 billion towards a potential request for proposals from States or other public entities to encourage creative solutions that work with local water users to incentivize long-term water reductions.

We look forward to working with you to find solutions for the immediate crisis of the River while working towards a long-term solution to the challenges posed by a changing climate and the emergence of mega-drought in our states and throughout the American West.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

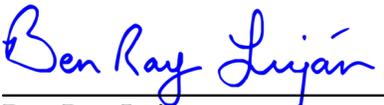
Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress