

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2019

Senator Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein:

We write to request funding allotted for the Bureau of Reclamation in fiscal year 2020 (FY20) to keep the planning and construction of projects like Colorado's Arkansas Valley Conduit on schedule. The Conduit project is our top priority and after years of insufficient funding, we hope this year's funding request will allow this project and others to move forward to the engineering and construction phase as quickly as possible.

The Arkansas Valley Conduit is a planned 130-mile water-delivery system from the Pueblo Dam to communities throughout the Arkansas River Valley in Southeast Colorado. The Conduit is the final phase of the Fryingspan-Arkansas Project, which Congress authorized in 1962. When completed, it will help bring clean drinking water to more than 50,000 people in over 40 communities in the lower Arkansas Valley.

The federal government has repeatedly promised to build this Conduit. In 2009, bipartisan legislation was signed committing to fund a substantial share of the project costs. The Bureau of Reclamation has already spent close to \$30 million to fund detailed planning and feasibility studies, and helping to design and plan the project. While the project will require funding over the next decade, the Bureau of Reclamation will fully recoup these costs over time through non-federal repayments, a mechanism also approved by Congress.

Additionally, efforts undertaken by project participants have significantly lowered the estimated federal outlays that will be required to complete this project.

We are disappointed to see the President's budget request for FY20 doesn't include this vital project. We ask that the subcommittee maintain or increase funding from FY19 enacted levels to move the project toward the construction phase.

In the past, the Conduit project has benefited from additional funding categories through some of the Bureau's water-related programs. One of those categories is entitled "Water Conversation and Delivery," under "Additional Funding for Water and Related Resources Work." We ask the Subcommittee to fund this category at least at the level appropriated in FY 16, which was \$10 million.

We also ask it to include the following language (underlined) in the committee report, which was included in the FY17 committee report:

Additional Funding for Water and Related Resources Work. — The Committee recommendation includes an additional \$ _____ above the budget request for Water and Related Resources studies, projects, and activities. Priority in allocating these funds should be given to advance and complete ongoing work; improve water supply reliability; improve water deliveries; enhance national, regional, or local economic development; promote job growth; advance tribal and nontribal water settlement studies and activities; or address critical backlog maintenance and rehabilitation activities. Funding provided under the heading Additional Funding for Ongoing Work may be utilized for on-going work, including pre-construction activities, on projects which provide new or existing water supplies through additional infrastructure; provided, however, that priority should be given in allocating funds to on-going work on authorized projects for which environmental compliance has been completed. ...

If we work together, we are confident we can start construction of the Conduit on schedule. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator