



August 25, 2022

The Honorable Debra Haaland  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C. Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Tanya Trujillo  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C. Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C. Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland, Assistant Secretary Trujillo, and Commissioner Touton:

The Arizona Municipal Water Users Association (AMWUA) is extremely concerned about the current state of the Colorado River. If decisive action is not taken throughout the Colorado River Basin to reduce water usage, our municipalities and all who rely on the River could quickly find themselves facing a catastrophic shortage on the River.

The AMWUA cities include Avondale, Chandler, Gilbert, Glendale, Goodyear, Mesa, Peoria, Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tempe. These municipalities collectively provide water to more than 3.7 million people, over half of the state's population as well as to the businesses and industries that are critical to Arizona and the national economy. These municipal providers are responsible for meeting the water demands of their communities. Abrupt, drastic shortages can lead to serious consequences for existing communities by creating extreme challenges to their water treatment and delivery systems, as well as negatively impacting the Valley's manufacturing and high-tech industries along with financial services, health care, higher education institutions, and other economic drivers, which collectively support the \$281 billion GDP of the Phoenix metropolitan area. The AMWUA cities are prepared for having less Colorado River water, but not for having none.

We are extremely concerned that without a tangible, long-lasting, and enforceable plan to permanently reduce demands by all water users throughout the Basin, Colorado River conditions will rapidly spiral towards deadpool and there will be no water to benefit our communities or any users of the River. We agree with the Bureau of Reclamation's statements that "the system is approaching a tipping point, and without action we cannot protect the system and the millions of Americans who rely on this critical resource" and "to avoid a catastrophic collapse of the Colorado River system, water use in the basin must be reduced." We understood Commissioner Touton's June pronouncement to mean that if the seven Basin States did not come up with a plan by August 15, 2022 to reduce water demand throughout the Basin annually by 2 to 4 million acre-feet, the Department of Interior would pursue unilateral action.

## Arizona Municipal Water Users Association

We are disappointed that Interior did not take action to protect the Colorado River system. The current risk of reaching critical reservoir elevations in 2023 is unacceptable and creates more uncertainty about what amounts of River water can be expected next year and beyond. Water providers must determine and submit their Colorado River water orders for next year by October 1<sup>st</sup>. Once those orders are submitted, they must plan accordingly for how to move vast amounts of water within our service areas and supplement with other supplies if their Colorado River water is reduced beyond what they are told would be available in 2023. We have supported and prepared according to the current framework for managing the River, including the 2007 Interim Guidelines and the Drought Contingency Plan. With uncertainty increasing, we can no longer rely on a year-to-year approach with short-term, voluntary band aids. Water providers need a long-term sustainable approach that will stabilize the River system and provide greater certainty since critical management decisions are being made that will impact millions of residents.

The AMWUA cities are aware of Arizona's junior priority pursuant to the 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act's authorization of the Central Arizona Project. Precisely because of CAP's junior priority status, Arizona has historically agreed to take the first cuts under the current framework and has proactively left 800,000 acre-feet, including contributions from cities, in Lake Mead this year. They have invested billions to protect our allocations of Colorado River water and constructed the treatment plants and other infrastructure necessary to treat and deliver this water to their residents and businesses. They have also made significant investments to prepare for times of shortage of Colorado River water. However, nothing about today's environment is consistent with what was happening in 1968. A mega-drought, climate change and aridification of the West force us to confront the stark reality that the River can no longer provide enough water for the current level of use. Drying up the Central Arizona Project will not fix this crisis. Each of the Basin States and all users of Colorado River water must step up and contribute water use reductions to protect this vital and fragile water supply.

AMWUA respectfully requests that Reclamation intervene forcefully and quickly to spur cooperation among the diverse interests in the seven Basin States. Without your leadership, we do not believe it will be possible to develop a timely solution necessary to avert the looming disaster. Such a plan needs to be equitable throughout the Basin and among all users and include tangible, long-lasting, enforceable reductions. The recently authorized \$4 billion for drought mitigation is a welcome tool to contribute to a solution; however, we encourage that the expenditure of those monies lead to long-term durable reductions that stabilize the overall River system.

We are confident that with your firm, resolute leadership a collaborative, long-term, sustainable solution to avert this imminent Colorado River crisis is possible.

Sincerely,



Warren Tenney  
Executive Director

cc: Arizona Congressional Delegation

## Arizona Municipal Water Users Association