



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Established in 1918 as a public agency

GENERAL MANAGER
Jim Barrett

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Robert Cheng

March 26, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
United States Senate
304 Kirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Cortez Masto:

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), together with other California water agencies, has been a strong supporter of the Colorado River Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP). The process took a significant step forward with the recent signing ceremony held on March 18, 2019 between the seven Colorado River Basin states and the Bureau of Reclamation to advance the package of negotiated agreements in consideration for federal legislation.

However, the work is not yet complete, and CVWD respectfully requests your consideration and favorable vote on the required legislation in order to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to execute four DCP agreements and to carry out their provisions regarding the operations of Colorado River System reservoirs.

The seven Basin states have had a long history of managing the Colorado River in a collaborative fashion to ensure reliable water supplies for over 40 million people throughout the basin. The DCP's strength lies in its foundation as a consensus-based document, achieved over years-long negotiations among the Basin states and Reclamation. Under the DCP, water curtailment actions to users may be avoided through additional conserved water stored in Lake Mead, electrical power will continue to be generated in Lake Powell as a result of the preservation of water elevation levels, and states are able to mitigate the effects of the poor hydrology within their borders through the additional water management actions.

The legislation is purposefully narrow and specifically tailored to give the Secretary the authority to implement the DCP without altering or disregarding the water rights of any user along the river. The legislation also recognizes that the proposed actions do not override the environmental review process. In fact, the proposed modified operations under the Lower Basin DCP are among the environmental alternatives that were analyzed (through the NEPA process) for the 2007 Record of Decision on "Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead."

While California is officially out of drought for the first time in seven long years thanks to the abundant rains and snow the state has received over the winter months, weather patterns are no longer predictable and a return to drought is a very real possibility. The additional operational rules created under the Lower Basin DCP will incentivize Lower Basin water contractors to store additional conserved water in Lake Mead, which will buffer against the possibility of delivery curtailment in another dry year.

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The water users in the seven Basin states have entrusted their representatives to craft a framework that was good for the entire Colorado River Basin. The DCP is exactly that, and we ask for your consideration and favorable vote for the required legislation. If you have any questions regarding the agreements or Coachella Valley Water District's support of the agreements, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at (760) 398-2651 or at jbarrett@cvwd.org. CVWD looks forward to working with you and the other members of our delegation to secure passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



J.M. Barrett
General Manager

cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair
The Honorable Joe Manchin, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources