



September 1, 2022

Secretary Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Re: Request for Input on Development of Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operational Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead Under Historically Low Reservoir Conditions

Dear Secretary Haaland,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed development of Post-2026 Colorado River Operational Strategies.

The Washington County Water Conservancy District (District) is a political subdivision of the State of Utah. The District is charged with conserving, developing, managing, and stabilizing water supplies for the citizens of Washington County.

The U.S. Census has identified Washington County as the fastest-growing metro area in America.¹ The county's population is projected to more than double by 2050.² Washington County is Utah's hottest, driest region. All major population centers are currently dependent on a single water source, the Virgin River Basin, which is reaching its full development capacity. The basin has been in drought conditions 16 of the last 20 years and water supply levels at local reservoirs are decreasing.

The county's long-term water supply plan includes additional water conservation and reuse, local source optimization, and new resource development. Washington County has already reduced its per capita water use more than 30% since 2000—the greatest reduction in water use in Utah—and is planning for an additional 14% reduction by 2030, using 2015 as the baseline year.

The District has a strong interest in the post-2026 Colorado River operations. The District supports the Basin States' efforts to develop an alternative and hereby incorporates the Colorado River Basin States comment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zachary Renstrom".

Zachary Renstrom
General Manager
zach@wcwcd.org

¹ Hemmersmeier, S. (2022, April 2). *Census: St. George is Fastest-Growing in U.S. Again*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/utah-st-george-census-2020-19c02de8f8a6d0de0528c422eb84f15a>

² *Utah Long-Term Planning Projection Summary*, (2022, January 31). Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Washington-Proj-Feb2022.pdf?x71849>