

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Secretary Burgum,

The undersigned members of Arizona’s congressional delegation submit this letter to express our deep concerns regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

The waters of the Colorado River are foundational to the economy of the Basin and the upcoming decisions that will be made by the Secretary will be felt in the West for generations. Yet the alternatives currently being proposed in the DEIS impose all the required cuts exclusively on the Lower Basin while leaving Upper Basin States free to increase their uses, even though the Lower Basin has 75% of the total Basin population, 75% of the economy, 76% of the jobs, and 78% of the crop sales.

The DEIS alternatives disproportionately reduce Arizona’s Colorado River allocation. Arizona has been efficient and economical in its use of Colorado River water delivered by the Central Arizona Project – creating jobs that have allowed the State’s population to more than double while managing to use less water at the same time over the past 40 years. The Colorado River supports a thriving advanced microchip manufacturing industry and critical mineral and agricultural production in Arizona. The proposed alternatives would risk these advancements, which is a threat to our national security. Further, the alternatives would all but sever the over six million Arizonans supported by the Central Arizona Project from Colorado River supplies they have relied upon for more than four decades, threaten massive cuts to on-river rural communities, and slash the water supplies of tribal communities.

The DEIS itself acknowledges the severity of these consequences, stating that “*widespread impacts on social and economic conditions may also be possible,*” including scenarios in which municipalities may need to pursue alternative or even hauled water sources to maintain basic services. It is from this perspective that we wish to communicate our grave distress over the alternatives proposed in the DEIS which threaten to devastate Arizona and risk the nation’s security.

The DEIS includes significant legal fatal flaws including: a failure to analyze the devastating socioeconomic impacts to Arizona; Upper Basin delivery obligations are entirely missing from the analysis as is the Department of the Interior’s authority and responsibility to manage

federally owned Upper Basin reservoirs to comply with the Colorado River Compact of 1922; a failure to consider the United States' obligations under the U.S.–Mexico Water Treaty, which governs binational deliveries and is essential to any complete operational analysis of the river; and a failure to fully analyze reasonable alternatives. The DEIS also ignores a century of law on how water is shared among the Colorado River Basins. Because the DEIS includes multiple legal fatal flaws, we respectfully request that the Department of the Interior withdraw the document from further consideration. The United States must implement a decision that reflects sound policy considerations and complies with the Law of the River and its foundational document – the Colorado River Compact of 1922.

Arizona remains committed to working collaboratively with the other Basin States, Reclamation, and the Department of the Interior to reach a durable, balanced agreement. The Colorado River system functions best when risks, responsibilities, and necessary reductions are shared equitably to protect both the river and the infrastructure upon which the entire Basin depends. We welcome the opportunity to work with the agency to ensure a revised DEIS that complies with applicable law.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments on this issue of paramount importance.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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