

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

The Honorable Andrea Travnicek
Assistant Secretary for Water and Science
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum and Assistant Secretary Travnicek:

We, the undersigned members of the Arizona congressional delegation, write today to provide comment on the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for post-2026 Colorado River operations, released on January 16, 2026. Simply put, none of the proposed alternatives are viable for Arizona's continued water security.

We appreciate Reclamation's ongoing efforts to facilitate a state-led, consensus-driven agreement among the seven Basin States. We cannot take our focus off securing an agreement that acknowledges the environmental realities of a region plagued by megadrought but demands equitable conservation efforts by all Basin States. But in the DEIS, Reclamation risks pursuing an unsustainable distribution of reductions and responsibilities across the Basin States, placing our constituents and their livelihoods in harm's way.

Arizona has and will continue to do its part to protect the Colorado River, but we cannot do it alone. We are deeply troubled that Reclamation all but abandons its increasingly critical role in ensuring the Upper Basin States fulfill their delivery obligations under the Colorado River Compact of 1922 (Compact). However, the DEIS alternatives impose required reductions exclusively on the Lower Basin, despite the region accounting for approximately 75 percent of the Basin's population and economic output. And each alternative, though broad in scope, will translate in practice specifically as drastic reductions to Arizona's water supply.

Across Arizona, you will find communities whose primary—if not sole—source of water is the Colorado River. The DEIS itself acknowledges that “widespread impacts on social and economic conditions may also be possible,” including circumstances in which municipalities may need to pursue alternative or even hauled water sources to maintain basic services. Drastic cuts could have cascading consequences for human health and safety and destabilize the lives and livelihoods of Arizonans, tribal communities, and critical industries that rely on Colorado River supplies.

Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, many of whom hold significant Colorado River entitlements that underpin economic and community development, public health, and long-planned water infrastructure investments. Any post-2026 framework for the river must protect settled and

present perfected tribal water rights to fulfill the federal trust responsibility, which the current DEIS fails to meet.

Significant reductions may also undermine the security of the United States. Arizona's agriculture, semiconductor and advanced manufacturing, aerospace and defense industries rely on the Colorado River. Arizona's agricultural industry supplies essential products—including fresh produce, dairy, beef, and forage crops—that ensure regional and national food security. Reductions of the magnitude contemplated in the DEIS would reverberate across rural communities and throughout the domestic food supply chain.

Arizona also boasts the largest concentration of advanced semiconductor manufacturing investment in the country, representing roughly \$200 billion in announced projects since 2020. A reliable domestic chip supply is critical to military modernization, artificial intelligence leadership, and global economic competitiveness. The scale of reductions contemplated in the DEIS places these strategic investments at risk.

Moreover, Reclamation must acknowledge that the American West is in a crisis. The Basin remains firmly in the grip of a megadrought that squeezes our states dry and threatens drinking water, hydropower, and recreational opportunities. And now, record-low snowpack has made it so current watershed conditions are dire across the entire Basin. Deliveries to the Lower Basin do not simply sustain life downriver; the physical infrastructure that was established by the Compact is at risk of failure due to low flows throughout the Lower Basin.

We respectfully urge Reclamation to reject any post-2026 operating framework that fails to meaningfully address our concerns—whether in negotiations with the seven Basin States or in a final EIS—and to ensure post-2026 operations will sustain Arizona and the entire Basin for years to come. Specifically, we ask that Reclamation:

1. Include verifiable Upper Basin conservation measures commensurate with Lower Basin conservation measures, including identifying tangible metrics that demonstrate Upper Basin water conservation.
2. Identify all possible activities that would require congressional authorities necessary to implement a post-2026 operational plan.
3. Provide detailed analysis of how to operate federally managed Upper Basin reservoirs to support system-wide stability and protect critical infrastructure at both Lake Powell and Lake Mead, including consideration for releases of water from the Colorado River Storage Project initial units as necessary to ensure Compact compliance and protect critical elevations in Lake Powell.

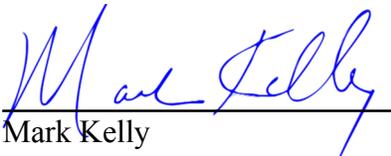
More broadly, the document does not fully grapple with the complex and longstanding legal and operational framework that has governed the allocation and management of Colorado River water for more than a century. These concerning deficiencies should be addressed as the environmental review process moves forward and, more importantly, as the post-2026 operating agreement is

developed and finalized. Any durable framework must reflect sound policy, equitable risk sharing, and fidelity to the Law of the River.

Arizona remains committed to working collaboratively with the other Basin States, Reclamation, and the Department of the Interior to reach a balanced and sustainable agreement that protects both the river system and the communities and industries that depend upon it.

We too stand ready to work with Reclamation on a realistic path towards a long-term operational plan for the Colorado River system. Thank you for your time and consideration of our views on this matter of critical importance.

Sincerely,


Mark Kelly
United States Senator


Ruben Gallego
United States Senator


Greg Stanton
Member of Congress


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