

Moving Forward: The Future of the Colorado River Basin, San Diego, California, May 28, 2013

Anne Castle, Department of the Interior, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science: Good afternoon everybody and welcome to our Colorado River Basin Study 'next steps' rollout. It's wonderful to see everyone here and to see the interest of all of you in this very significant effort that we're making on the Colorado River. We see the Colorado River Basin Study as a call to action for all the water users in the entire region. With a median projected shortfall of 3.2 million acre-feet and that's enough to serve about 5 million households – a city that's larger than the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area – that's an alarm clock that we can't hit the 'snooze' button on. What the study shows us is that we have to do more. And we have to do more together. Saying that we're all in this together isn't just a sort of tired, old shopworn cliché, in this case it happens to be absolutely true.

Darryl Vigil, Jicarilla Apache Tribe, Representing the Ten Tribes: As Native peoples we have a vested interest, in terms of the protection and sustainability of the Colorado River as it is, in our minds, the lifeblood of who we are, culturally and physically. And so, we are committed in that collaborative process in terms of what our interests are in terms of protecting and collaborating with other stakeholders in the Basin to ensure the sustainability of the river.”

Pat Tyrrell, Wyoming State Engineer, Representing Upper Basin States: Cooperation among all basin stakeholders is essential for the development of broad-based appreciation of the challenges and the need for sustainable, practical and collaborative solutions. Cooperation and collaboration among the seven basin states and DOI has been extensive. This is a critical time in the history and in the future of the Colorado River. How we move ahead, using the basin study as a springboard, will determine how our successors view us. More importantly, it will help determine their quality of life and the quality of their environment for the decades to come.”

Jennifer Pitt, Colorado River Program Dir., Environmental Defense Fund: Today, as Secretary Castle mentioned, I am speaking on behalf of a number of conservation organizations that participated in the preparation of the Colorado River Basin Study and we are ready to work hard on solutions to ensure reliable water supplies for our farms and ranches, our communities, and healthy flows in our rivers they all depend on. For the next phase of the Colorado River Basin Study, conservation groups would like to see the recommendations presented in the study – more efficient use of existing urban water supplies, reuse of waste water, better watershed management, improved agricultural techniques, and modern solutions such as water banks – translated into new programs.

Sandra Fabritz-Whitney, Director, Ariz. Dept. of Water Resources, Representing Lower Basin States: What the study does for us, though, is creates this opportunity for us to come together again. We've been working together for decades. The ability for these states – these very divergent states with very divergent points of view and climates and everything – the amazing thing that they can come together and create solutions has been what's made this a success and makes this river system sort of an example for other river systems as we move forward.

Commissioner Michael Connor, Bureau of Reclamation: All told, we've brought legal certainty, operational certainty, and a mechanism for good investments and good water management in this basin. But as you've heard about today, we need to take those next steps, we need to do it together, we need to build out and do it in a collaborative fashion and we're bringing more people into the room as part of this problem-solving effort. And I can't help but think with the creative juices flowing and with the commitment and with the seriousness of purpose there's a vast number of reasons why we should be optimistic even as we recognize the challenges before us.

Anne Castle: What's unique about this step is the broad, inclusive partnership that is making this public commitment today to pursue concrete and implementable solutions. So we are proud of the basin study. It is a call to action. It will be the next step on a staircase of many but it's one that is going to involve many different interests and have the best possible result because of that.