



June 22, 2011

**To:** Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar  
Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Michael Connor

**Cc:** Colorado River Basin Governors and Members of Congress in Arizona, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Wyoming and California

The Colorado River fuels our economy in the seven Basin states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Thirty million people, from Denver to Los Angeles, drink its water. It enriches 3 million acres of farmland. And the economic value of the River goes far beyond the consumption of its water. It supports a way of life that keeps people coming out West. Millions of tourists flock to the banks of the River and its tributaries each year for boating, fishing, birding, hunting and hiking, which adds up to a multi-billion dollar recreation economy.

**As business owners and leaders in the Colorado River Basin, we urge you to keep water flowing in the River so the revenue it supports keeps flowing into our local economies.**

According to the Bureau of Reclamation, demand for the River's water now exceeds its supply. We are, therefore, dipping into our water storage reserves throughout the Basin to keep up with demand, leaving our reservoirs half empty. While some of the Basin has seen plenty of snow and runoff in 2011, these supply and demand trends are projected to keep heading in a troubling direction overall. As business people, we know how to keep an eye on the bottom line – this balance sheet is unsustainable.

Until 1998, the River stretched all the way from its source in the Colorado Rockies to Mexico's Sea of Cortez. Now, it dries up in the Sonoran Desert miles before it reaches the sea. If something doesn't change, this trend will continue to move upstream to our communities and businesses. We must apply innovation and collaboration to a challenge that will only become more acute as population growth increases demand and a changing climate limits the supply of water in the River and its tributaries.

We now have an opportunity to begin to deal responsibly with the challenge before us. The Bureau of Reclamation, in coordination with representatives from the seven Basin states, is conducting a study on the future of the River and will be proposing solutions to address increasing strain upon the River's water supply. We ask that the study's participants take a sober accounting of the River's fate and propose a path forward that does not simply continue to facilitate the consumption of the River's water, but also the health and sustainability of the River itself. Our economic future is tied to a Colorado River that flows strong and beckons people to our communities. Let's seize this opportunity to keep this lifeline in the West flowing for generations to come.

Sincerely,

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