



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
125 South State Street, Room 8100
Salt Lake City, UT 84138-1102



IN REPLY REFER TO:

UCB-100
2.2.4.23

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Interested Parties

Subject: Request for Input for the Upper Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program

Greetings:

On October 12, 2022, the Department of the Interior (Department) made an [announcement](#) of actions to address drought in the Colorado River Basin with funding support from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). At that time, the Department announced that at least \$500 million would be available for investment in the Upper Colorado River Basin States for long-term system efficiency improvements that will result in additional water conservation for the entire system.

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is implementing these funds in two phases. For the first phase, Reclamation has partnered with the Upper Colorado River Commission to make available up to \$125 million of IRA funds for a System Conservation Pilot Program. Reclamation anticipates using most of the remaining funding for the second phase of the program (Phase 2), which will focus on long-term, durable projects. The purpose of this letter is to request input on the types and nature of projects, project selection criteria, and program administration considerations that Reclamation should consider when distributing funds for Phase 2.

The use of this funding is a part of the commitment made by the Department on August 16, 2022, to address the drought crisis with prompt and responsive actions and investments to ensure the entire Colorado River Basin can function and support all who rely on it. Prolonged drought and low runoff conditions accelerated by climate change have led to historically low water levels in Lakes Powell and Mead. Over the last two decades, Department leaders have engaged with Colorado River Basin partners on various drought response operations; however, additional action is needed to protect the Colorado River system and prevent the reservoirs from falling to critically low elevations, threatening water deliveries and power production. The historic funding committed by the Biden-Harris Administration for water management and conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin and other basins experiencing comparable levels of long-term drought includes \$4 billion from the IRA.

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Reclamation is seeking input on Phase 2 projects that could fall into the following three general categories:

- System conservation and efficiency projects that achieve verifiable, multi-year reductions in use of or demand for water supplies,
- Demonstration projects to spur advances in water conservation and efficiency using innovative techniques,
- Ecosystem and habitat restoration projects to address issues directly caused by drought.

Reclamation is specifically requesting input on the types of projects that may be eligible for funding and the evaluation criteria that might be used during project selection. Reclamation is also seeking input on the administration of the program. Specifically, what level of administrative partnership with the Upper Division States, the Upper Colorado River Commission, and/or other governmental entities would be effective/beneficial for the types and nature of projects proposed.

Reclamation is working to release the solicitation for potential Phase 2 projects later in calendar year 2023 and appreciates your suggestions to help make the program a success. Comments will be taken until Friday July 07, 2023, and can be sent via email to: UCBEfficiency@usbr.gov.

Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region has recently sent a similar [request](#) for input regarding its Lower Colorado Conservation Program. Additional information from Reclamation will be forthcoming on IRA programs in other basins experiencing comparable levels of long-term drought.

For the deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired, please dial 7-1-1 to access the telecommunications relay system.

Sincerely,

Wayne G. Pullan
Regional Director