

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur, Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Energy and Water Development
Subcommittee

The Honorable Mike Simpson, Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Energy and Water Development
Subcommittee

Transmittal via email: EW.Approp@mail.house.gov

**RE: SUPPORT FOR WATER PROGRAMS AFFECTING THE COLORADO RIVER
BASIN - FY 2021 APPROPRIATIONS**

Dear Chair Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson:

As members of WaterNow Alliance, we respectfully request your support for full funding for the Bureau of Reclamation's Water and Energy Efficiency Grants (WEEG) program, the Drought Response Program, and the Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP), three programs that are part of WaterSMART, as well as the Bureau's Title XVI-WIIN grant program.

The Colorado River is a vital resource in the West, providing water for over 35 million people, 5 million acres of agricultural land, and an estimated \$1 trillion dollars in total economic activity. However, the Bureau of Reclamation anticipates demands will exceed supplies by over 3 million acre-feet in coming years. Recent reductions in reservoir levels, as experienced in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, demonstrate how critical conserving water is in this arid region. Our ability to provide clean and reliable drinking water faces growing challenges from drought, stormwater runoff, aging infrastructure, rising costs, and more. Effective collaboration between federal, state, and local governments and tribes is essential to more efficiently and sustainably manage water in the region. Even with the passage of the historic Colorado River Drought Contingency Plans last year, collaborative action plans amongst the Colorado River Basin states, federal funding is needed to ensure the region's drought resilience in the long term.

The Bureau's water programs are essential for our communities. The WEEG program funds projects that conserve and use water more efficiently and contribute to water supply reliability in the western United States, and since 2008, has supported more than 280 projects leveraging more than \$150 million in investment, saving 1 million acre-feet of water annually.¹ The Drought Response Program supports a proactive approach to drought by funding drought resiliency planning as well as projects that increase the reliability of water supply and sustainability and provide benefits for fish and wildlife and the environment, among others.² The CWMP supports

¹ Water and Energy Efficiency Grants, WaterSMART, Bureau of Reclamation <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/weeg/index.html> (last accessed March 25, 2020). To ensure the WEEG program funds projects that conserve and use water more efficiently, we also respectfully recommend that Congress direct the Bureau to prioritize multi-benefits projects that conserve water and benefit fish and wildlife, ensure that no grants support projects that increase consumptive use, and align with other WaterSMART programs to enable development of multipurpose projects in FY21 and going forward.

² Drought Response Program, WaterSMART, Bureau of Reclamation <https://www.usbr.gov/drought/> (last accessed April 7, 2020). To ensure the Drought Response Program funds projects that will build long-term resiliency to

local solutions to address water management needs.³ The Title XVI-WIIN competitive grant program provides funding for planning, design, and construction of water reuse projects—the only federal program of its kind.⁴ Therefore, we urge you to fully support each of these Bureau programs and respectfully recommend the below appropriations:

- **WEEG program: \$55 million**
- **Drought Response Program: \$10 million**
- **CWMP: \$20 million**
- **Title XVI-WIIN: \$100 million**

We thank you for your consideration of our comments and recommendations. We look forward to working with you, your staff, and other Members to ensure these vital Bureau water programs are sufficiently funded so that they continue to provide long-lasting benefits to the communities local water leaders like ourselves serve.

Sincerely,

Adam C Ly
Assistant GM
Palmdale Water District, CA

Bart Forsyth
General Manager/CEO
Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District, UT

Adrian Hernandez
Councilmember Position 4
City of Pearland, TX

Brian Biesemeyer
Executive Director
Scottsdale Water, AZ

Alejandra Valadez
Grants Coordinator
City of Socorro, NM

Briana Morgan
Water Conservation Specialist
Lake Havasu City Municipal Government, AZ

Andy Ryder
Mayor
City of Lacey, WA

Carmen Ramirez
Mayor Pro Tem
City of Oxnard, CA

Anita Seitz
Mayor Pro Tem
City of Westminster, CO

Caryn Johnson
Councilmember
Town of Castle Rock, CO

Aron Kulhavy
City Manager
City of Huntsville, TX

Charles Wilson
Executive Director and CEO
Southern California Water Coalition, CA

drought, we also respectfully recommend that Congress direct the Bureau to prioritize projects that increase sustainability and provide benefits for fish and wildlife and the environment in FY21 and going forward.

³ Cooperative Watershed Management Program, WaterSMART, Bureau of Reclamation <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/cwmp/> <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/cwmp/> (last accessed April 1, 2020).

⁴ Title XVI - Water Reclamation and Reuse Program, Bureau of Reclamation <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/title/> (last accessed April 15, 2020).

Cheryl Wink
Council Member
City of Englewood, CO

Christine Gray
Business Operations Coordinator-Public
Works & Utilities
City of Westminster, CO

Clayton Evers
Director of Public Works
City of Kilgore, TX

Connie B. Schroeder
Mayor
City of Bastrop, TX

Curtis Mitchell
Utilities Director
City of Fountain, CO

Cynthia Pratt
Deputy Mayor
City of Lacey, WA

Dan March
Trustee Town of Frederick Colorado
Town of Frederick, CO

Daniel Lee
Council Member
Culver City, CA

Daniel Muelrath
General Manager
Diablo Water District, CA

Daniel R. Ferons
General Manager
Santa Margarita Water District, CA

David Cantu
Aldersperson Pl 2
City of San Elizario, TX

David Sypher
Public Works Director
City of Farmington, NM

David Tuckett
City Manager
City of Payson, UT

Derek O. Robinson Sr.
Council Member District 4
Madera City, CA

Doug Engfer
Chair
Water Commission, City of Santa Cruz, CA

Ed Pankevicius
Chief Plant
Copper Mtn. Water & Sanitation, CO

Eduardo Martinez
City council member
City of Richmond, CA

Erin Young
Water Resources Manager
City of Flagstaff Water Services, AZ

Frank A Jimenez
Trustee
Town of Firestone, CO

Frank F Archuleta
City Councilmember
City of Windcrest, TX

Gary Kremen
Board member
Santa Clara Valley Water District, CA

Greg Morrison
Government Relations Officer
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, CA

Guy Phillips
Councilman
City of Scottsdale, AZ

Harry Saltgaver
President of the Board of Commissioners
City of Long Beach Water Department, CA

Harry Zimmer
Treasurer
Chippeway Park Water Association, NM

Henry Hash
Director of Public Works
City of Tukwila, WA

Hillary Schieve
Mayor
City of Reno, NV

Holly Loff
Executive Director
Eagle River Watershed Council, CO

J.M. Barrett
General Manager
Coachella Valley Water District, CA

Jacquelynn Bowens
Support Services Officer
Eastern New Mexico Water Utility
Authority, NM

Jason Brown
City Manager
Beaver City, UT

Jeannine Pearce
Councilwoman
City of Long Beach, CA

Jeff Goble
Public Works Director / Water
Superintendent
Town of Frisco, CO

Jennifer Capitolo
Executive Director
California Water Association

Jennifer Lee
Environmental Regulatory Compliance
Manager
City of Burlingame, CA

Jerry P Weiers
Mayor
City of Glendale, CA

John Ballew
Chair
Durango Infrastructure Board, CO

John Bosler
General Manager/CEO
Cucamonga Valley Water District, CA

Jon L. Voelz
City Councillor
City of Westminster, CO

Jose Ornelas
Councilmember
City of San Joaquin, CA

Karn Stiegelmeier
Summit County Commissioner
Summit County, CO

Kathryn L. Skulley
Westminster City Councillor
City of Westminster, CO

Kathy Besser
Exec. Mgr. of External Affairs & Policy
Development/AGM
Inland Empire Utilities Agency, CA

Kathy Chandler-Henry
County Commissioner
Eagle County, CO

Kenneth G Summers
City Councilmember
City of Fort Collins, CO

Khee Lim
Public Works Director
City of Millbrae, CA

Kirk R. Vincent
Water Resources Board, Chairman
City of Boulder, Water Utilities

Kirsten Keith
Board of Directors
Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency, CA

Kristie Hadnot
Grants Manager
City of Huntsville, TX

Kyle Cason
Director of Public Works
City of Whittier, CA

Laura Lynch
Water Division Manager
Town of Breckenridge, CO

Lauren Kuby
Vice Mayor
City of Tempe, AZ

Lauren McLean
Mayor
City of Boise, ID

Lester J. Friedman
Mayor
City of Beverly Hills, CA

Marcia Martin
Member of City Council (Ward 2)
City of Longmont, CO

Margaret Clark
City Councilmember
City of Rosemead, CA

Mark Helman
Water Utility Superintendent
Town of Dillon, CO

Mark Krause
General Manager
Desert Water Agency, CA

Matt LeCerf
Town Manager
Town of Johnstown, CO

Matthew Litchfield
General Manager
Three Valleys Municipal Water District, CA

Meghan Sahli-Wells
Mayor
City of Culver City, CA

Nancy Smith
Vice Mayor
City of Sunnyvale, CA

Neal Stone
Administrative Officer
Town of Fort Laramie, CO

Nina Jazmadarian
General Manager
Foothill Municipal Water District, CA

Olan D Massingill
City Manager
City of Brazoria, TX

Orlando Ortega
Administrator
Eastern New Mexico Water Utility Authority, NM

Paul Hempel
Source Water Specialist
Colorado Rural Water Association

Pete Laybourn
Cheyenne Wyoming City Councilman
City of Cheyenne, WY

Pieter Van Ry
Director
City of Englewood Utilities / South Platte Water
Renewal Partners, CO

Randy Luensmann
Director of Public Works
City of Universal City, TX

Reginald A. Lamson
General Manager
City of Big Bear Lake Department of Water and
Power, CO

Richard Harasick
Senior Assistant General Manager - Water
City of Los Angeles, Department of Water
& Power, CA

Thomas A. McCalden
Director
Bellyache Ridge Metro District, CO

Robert Martin
Public Works Director
Copper Mountain Consolidated
Metropolitan District, CO

Thomas P. Taggart
Director of Public Services
City of San Marcos, TX

Ron Duncan
General Manager
Soquel Creek Water District, CA

Timothy F. Brick
Board Member
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, CA

Roy Edgington
Mayor
City of Fernley, NV

Torie Jarvis
Director
Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Water
Quality/ Quantity Committee, CO

Roy Otto
City Manager
City of Greeley, CO

Trever Fleetham
Management Associate
Town of Payson, AZ

Stephanie Piko
Mayor
City of Centennial, CO

Troy Hopkins
Water Superintendent
City of Anna, TX

Stephen Jordan
Director
Purissima Hills Water District, CA

Steve Adler
Mayor
City of Austin, TX

Steve Elie
Director
Inland Empire Utilities Agency, CA

Steve Kana
Director of Water and Sewer
City of Killeen, TX

Steven C. Smith
Councilman
City of Lakeway, TX

Tartisha Hill
Councilwoman
City of Balch Springs, TX

CC: Members of the House Committee on Appropriations, Energy and Water Development
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