



**Colorado River Basin States Representatives of
Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming**

May 22, 2023

Sent via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton, Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Commissioner Touton:

The seven Colorado River Basin States Representatives write to inform you that Arizona, California and Nevada (Lower Division States) have notified Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming (Upper Division States)(collectively the Seven States) that the Lower Division States have reached agreement on a plan to conserve at least an additional 3 million acre-feet (MAF) of Colorado River water in the Lower Basin by the end of calendar year 2026 with at least 1.5 MAF of that total being conserved by the end of calendar year 2024 (Lower Basin Plan).

The comment period for the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Near-Term Colorado River Operations Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Draft SEIS) expires soon, and all Seven States acknowledge that there is insufficient time before that expiration for the Upper Division States to thoroughly review the Lower Basin Plan. Accordingly, nothing in this letter should be construed as an Upper Basin endorsement of the Lower Basin Plan. However, building on the historical success of the Seven States working together to solve the challenges confronting the Colorado River, the Seven States support the submission by the Lower Division States of the Lower Basin Plan to Reclamation concurrent with the submission of this correspondence. Further, all Seven States request that Reclamation analyze the Lower Basin Plan as an action alternative under the Draft SEIS. Therefore, we request that Reclamation provide sufficient time to fully analyze the Lower Basin Plan, consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and applicable law, and to provide the public with the opportunity to comment on that analysis. We recommend a suspension of the current Draft SEIS comment period, which is scheduled to close on May 30, 2023, and that Reclamation recirculate the Draft SEIS with the Lower Basin Plan as an action alternative as soon as possible with the goal of reaching a Record of Decision by this fall.

Finally, the Seven States recognize that having one good winter does not solve the systemic challenges facing the Colorado River. We strongly encourage

Reclamation to advance the process for the development of new operating guidelines replacing the 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead at the end of 2026. We request that Reclamation publish the Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Environmental Impact Statement related to the post-2026 guidelines no later than June 30, 2023, so that all parties can focus their resources on the development of the post-2026 guidelines while Reclamation concurrently takes all necessary actions to complete the current Draft SEIS process provided for above.

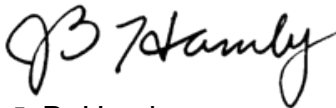
Respectfully,



Thomas Buschatzke
Governor's Representative
State of Arizona



Rebecca Mitchell
Governor's Representative
State of Colorado



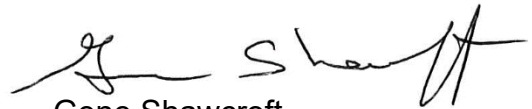
J. B. Hamby
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John J. Entsminger
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State of New Mexico



Gene Shawcroft
Governor's Representative
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Brandon Gebhart
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