



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Committee Item INFORMATION

- **Update on Colorado River negotiations and protection of Metropolitan's Colorado River water rights**

11/17/2025

6d

Subject

Update on Colorado River negotiations and protection of Metropolitan's Colorado River water rights [Conference with legal counsel – anticipated litigation – deciding whether to initiate litigation; unknown number of potential cases; to be heard in closed session pursuant to Gov. Code Section 54956.9(d)(4)]

Executive Summary

Reference letter dated November 11, 2025, to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.



November 11, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Burgum,

We appreciate your leadership and support this past year in working to develop a Post-2026 framework for the Colorado River that preserves the certainty and commitments to the Lower Basin agreed to by the Upper Basin in the 1922 Colorado River Compact. We respectfully request that as you prepare to guide the Post-2026 negotiations following the November 11, 2025, deadline for Basin States agreement, that you ensure that the future framework maintains compliance with the Compact.

Colorado River water fuels Arizona's advanced technology ecosystem, world-class agriculture, military bases, and the communities where millions of people live including 22 of the Basin's 30 Native American tribes. Arizona's growth continues to support the nation's advancement and independence in emerging technology sectors, power generation, and critical mineral development. Arizona's cutting-edge semiconductor industries and IT infrastructure are making it possible for the onshoring of manufacturing operations that are critical for maintaining American technological leadership. Yuma, one of the world's most sophisticated and productive agricultural regions, produces over 90% of the winter leafy greens that supply the United States and Canada each year.

We write to stress to you that Arizona's Colorado River allocation is important to not only Arizona and its citizens, but also to the nation's economic growth and independence. Colorado River reliability in Arizona is a matter of national security. However, based on the trajectory of Post-2026 negotiations over the last two years, it seems that these foundations of growth are at risk due to the refusal of the Upper Basin States to offer meaningful, verifiable conservation commitments.

Arizona has consistently been a basin-wide leader in water efficiency, and it's through these efficiencies that Arizona has been able to join California and Nevada in offering creative and significant proposals for Post-2026 operating criteria, including plans to conserve 1.5 million acre-feet (AF) of water per year under most scenarios. In Arizona, this would result in a reduction of greater than 27% of our Colorado River entitlement in most years in recognition of how serious action is needed to save this river. This follows more than 3 million AF of

conservation that the Lower Basin States have implemented since 2023 to stabilize Lake Mead and Lake Powell.

With such high stakes for Arizona and the Nation, we find it alarming that the Upper Basin States have repeatedly refused to implement any volume of binding, verifiable water supply reductions. This extreme negotiating posture – four of the seven Basin States refusing to participate in any sharing of water shortages – has led to a fundamental impasse that is preventing the successful development of a 7-State consensus plan for management of the Colorado River.

Under your leadership, we have seen renewed efforts and focus in developing a Post-2026 framework for the Colorado River, as well as a successful pivot from the flawed alternatives put forth by the prior administration. But time is running out. The existing Colorado River operating guidelines are near expiration, and a meager runoff season has left the reservoirs depleted once again and one bad winter away from reaching critical lows.

We urge you to utilize your authorities to ensure that whatever alternative is considered by the Department of the Interior contains measurable and enforceable conservation requirements for the Upper Basin to make certain that this crucial water resource remains available for Arizona and its contributions to the economy and national security of this country.

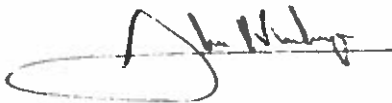
Sincerely,



Katie Hobbs,
Governor, State of Arizona



Warren Petersen
President, Arizona State Senate



Steve Montenegro
Speaker, Arizona House of Representatives



Priya Sundareshan
Democratic Leader, Arizona State Senate



Oscar De Los Santos
Democratic Leader, Arizona House of Representatives