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DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE
ENERGY & WATER SUBCOMMITTEE
FINANCIAL SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMODITY EXCHANGES, ENERGY AND
CREDIT SUBCOMMITTEE

January 29, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Brenda Burman
Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt and Commissioner Burman:

We write to thank you for your leadership in responding to the ongoing drought in the western United States and to ask you to ensure that provisions of the Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan Authorization Act (Public Law No: 116-14), and related federal funding subsequently provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, (Public Law No: 116-93), be implemented in a timely manner consistent with Congressional intent.

Prompt action is required to address the growing risks from drought and ensure sustainability of Colorado River water supplies. Drought is the single largest cause of U.S. farm production losses, accounting for more than 40 percent of total crop insurance payments, averaging \$4 billion annually¹. In Arizona, a significant amount of Colorado River water is used for agriculture, an industry that supports 138,000 jobs and the food and fiber they produce for the region and country².

Public Law 116-14 was adopted by Congress in recognition of the critical need to establish a comprehensive and effective drought response to this threat. It requires that the "...Secretary of the Interior shall, without delay, execute such agreements, and is directed and authorized to carry out the provisions of such agreements and operate applicable Colorado River System reservoirs accordingly." The Arizona Congressional Delegation unanimously supported P.L. 116-14, and now urges the Secretary to implement its provisions with funding recently provided to the Bureau by Congress.

The Arizona drought contingency plan is the only plan among the seven basin states that required the adoption of state legislation. An essential provision of the state legislation was an

¹ Wallander, S., Aillery, M., Hellerstein, D., & Hand, M. (2013, April). The Role of Conservation Programs in Drought Risk Adaptation. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45066/37190_err148.pdf?v=0

² Guide to Arizona Agriculture. (2018, December). https://agriculture.az.gov/sites/default/files/AZDA_GuideToAZAg-R5.pdf

agreement by central Arizona farmers to forgo their legal entitlement to Colorado River surface water in exchange for development of a groundwater well construction infrastructure project, of which roughly half of project costs (\$20-25 million) is expected to come from federal sources and the other half from state and local sources. This provision was critical to reaching agreement in Arizona on the plan, which, in turn, was necessary for completion of the seven basin state agreements and subsequent Congressional passage of drought legislation.

Accordingly, Members of our Delegation authored, and the entire Delegation supported, appropriations language and funding enabling the Bureau to fund a substantial portion of the infrastructure project, and such language was included in the final bill:

“Of the additional funding provided under the heading "Water Conservation and Delivery," \$20,000,000 shall be for water conservation activities in areas that are experiencing extended drought conditions. These water conservation activities shall include well construction and irrigation related structural or other measures, programs and projects that result in conservation of other surface water or groundwater, or improve water system efficiency, resiliency, reliability, delivery, and conveyance.”

State and local funding sources for half the project costs have been secured, but no federal funding has been provided to date. Thousands of Arizona farms and workers need certainty that federal funding will be provided so that the project can be completed and that their farming operations will continue without interruption or delay. The \$20 million in federal funding provided in the recent appropriations bill was designed for that very purpose. We appreciate that the Department and Bureau have multiple priorities, and we request that you make substantial funding for this project a top priority consistent with congressional intent.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



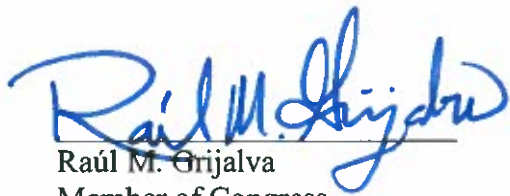
Martha McSally
United States Senator



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



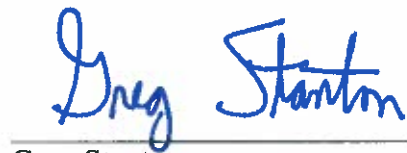
David Schweikert
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Debbie Lesko
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