

**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
APRIL 25 – 27, 2023**

COLORADO RIVER

ISSUE: Reducing demand on the Colorado River (River) is of critical importance to address the river's overallocation and to protect critical infrastructure at Lakes Mead and Powell by maintaining levels that allow for continued power generation. This demand reduction across the Southwest requires a solution that works for all seven Basin States and Mexico, including the 40 million people and nearly 6 million acres of farmland that rely on the Colorado River.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group urges Congress and the administration to support a framework that protects the Law of the River, which has provided stability for the states for the last century and offers additional voluntary conservation that respects existing law and leverages available federal funding for water use efficiency. MMG also urges the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to effectively deploy the funding made available through the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to reduce demand on the Colorado River.

BACKGROUND: Water from the Colorado River has been an essential part of Southern California's economic vitality for nearly 100 years; it provides water for its more than 20 million people and supports a nearly \$2 trillion economy. It also provides water and hydroelectric power to seven California counties, and irrigates over 600,000 acres of farmland, supporting a \$6.2 billion farm economy in Riverside and Imperial Counties. The Colorado River has also provided a reliable water supply when the bleak hydrology in California creates shortages around the state.

Fortunately, California knows how to permanently reduce use of the river; we have worked to reduce demand over the past 20 years, through billions of dollars of investments and the development of hard-earned partnerships. Water agencies in Riverside County, like Eastern and Western Municipal Water Districts, have effectively reduced demand by over 40 percent over the last two decades and are serving twice the population with the same quantity of water. California's path to sustainability was laid in 2003 when it permanently lost access to 800,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water, a 15 percent cut. Through agricultural, tribal, and urban partnerships that conserve and transfer supplies, California has reduced its use to its apportionment of 4.4 million acre-feet. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has forged agreements and funded conservation programs with agricultural users in the Imperial and Palo Verde valleys. Other states have not similarly implemented water management programs and made investments with agricultural users to conserve water, and instead, they seek reductions from California's water supply outside of the parameters of the Law of the River.

In response to the Commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's call for the states to develop a plan to reduce demand on the Colorado River by 2 to 4 million acre-feet, California advanced a proposal in October 2022 that commits California agencies to reduce demands by up to a 17 percent, depending on the level of Lake Mead. The proposal can be implemented quickly and avoids the delay and uncertainty of litigation. The voluntary component of the proposal preserves conservation agreements within California and across the Basin, including tribal partnerships. Because most of the contemplated reductions in the California plan are incentive-based, utilizing federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act will result in greater support and participation. In addition, the proposal protects communities across the West by prioritizing water for human health and safety.

The Monday Morning Group opposes the proposal advanced by the other six basin states, which was developed without California's input, and expects California to bear a disproportionate amount of the cuts, resulting in detrimental impacts to California. The six-state proposal imposes mandatory restrictions without providing tools to help reduce water use, and it does not consider interstate water rights that were authorized by Congress in the 1960s, including Arizona's agreement that it would have lower priority to Colorado River water than California during times of shortage. The proposal would strain beneficial partnerships that have been developed over the last 20 years within California and the broader Colorado River Basin, which would undermine negotiations toward long-term solutions.

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The Monday Morning Group supports the California proposal as it provides practical and achievable reductions to stabilize reservoir levels and fosters opportunities for Basin-state partners to work towards long-term solutions.

It is anticipated that the Bureau will include both the California proposal and the six-state proposal in its draft Supplemental EIS that is expected to be finalized this summer. There will be opportunities for agencies to provide comments to the Bureau following issue of the draft document, which is expected in late spring. The Monday Morning Group encourages comments to Bureau supporting California's position.