**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY**
**ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC**
**APRIL 20-23, 2026**

# REDUCING DEMAND ON THE COLORADO RIVER

**ISSUE:** The Colorado River is facing a structural water supply crisis driven by prolonged drought, climate change, and sustained overallocation. Declining flows threaten water reliability for 40 million people, major agricultural economies, and critical ecosystems across the West. As federal and state leaders develop new long-term operating rules, significant reductions in water use are unavoidable. The central challenge is ensuring these reductions are implemented in a manner that is equitable, sustainable, and consistent with existing interstate agreements, while avoiding disproportionate impacts on any single region or sector.

**ACTION:** The Monday Morning Group urges Congress and federal agencies to advance balanced, durable solutions that stabilize the Colorado River while ensuring fairness among the basin states. Federal policies and management decisions must ensure reductions are shared equitably across all basin states, without shifting a disproportionate burden onto California. Any long-term framework should respect existing legal agreements and water rights, ensure reductions are distributed equitably across the basin, and recognize the significant conservation and efficiency investments already made by California water agencies and users. Federal efforts should prioritize voluntary conservation, strategic infrastructure investments, and coordinated multi-state agreements that strengthen long-term system reliability. A balanced approach is critical to achieving long-term sustainability while protecting the communities, economies, and agricultural regions that depend on the river. Imposing disproportionate reductions on California would jeopardize agricultural production, increase costs for urban water users, and undermine decades of conservation investments.

**BACKGROUND:** The Colorado River is governed by a complex set of laws, agreements, and court decisions commonly referred to as the Law of the River. These agreements allocate water among the seven basin states and Mexico and establish the rules that guide how the river is managed.

Over the past two decades, the river basin has experienced one of the driest periods in recorded history. Reduced snowpack and rising temperatures have significantly lowered system inflows.

Reservoirs such as Lake Mead and Lake Powell have reached historically low levels, prompting federal agencies to work with basin states on new operating guidelines for post-2026 management. Meaningful reductions in water use will likely be necessary to maintain long-term system stability, but these reductions must be distributed fairly.

California has historically operated within its legal allocation and water agencies across the state have invested more than $8 billion in conservation and efficiency programs over the past two decades, resulting in substantial, measurable reductions in water use. Agricultural districts, urban water agencies, and local communities have implemented programs that have significantly reduced water use while maintaining economic productivity. Any new federal framework must recognize these efforts and ensure that states that have already made substantial reductions are not penalized compared to states that have historically used less efficient systems.

The Colorado River is a vital resource for communities, agriculture, and ecosystems across the American West. Stabilizing the river system is essential to protecting the region's long-term economic and environmental health. However, lasting solutions must be built on fairness and respect for the agreements that govern the river. Federal actions must ensure that all basin states share responsibility for reductions and that California is not required to shoulder a disproportionate burden. A collaborative, balanced approach that recognizes existing legal frameworks and past conservation efforts will provide the best path forward for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Colorado River system.