

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2026

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

The Honorable Russell Vought  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Secretary Burgum and Director Vought:

We write to respectfully urge the immediate release of all unexpended federal funds held by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to address drought across the Colorado River Basin (Basin).

In 2022, Congress secured \$4 billion in funding through fiscal year 2026 (FY2026) to support drought mitigation efforts in the Reclamation states and territories, with priority given to the Basin states. It is our understanding that significant funds from this allocation remain unexpended, despite existing agreements that would address worsening drought conditions on the Colorado River.

Acting Reclamation Commissioner Scott Cameron and Reclamation staff communicated to congressional staff that these unexpended dollars have, in part, been held back as bargaining chips for the federal government in Colorado River Compact negotiations. We understand that a substantial package of these funds was recently prepared by Reclamation and is now before the Office of Management and Budget for apportionment. We urge that these funds are advanced and expended immediately. We cannot afford to delay time-sensitive drought-mitigation projects any longer.

We also ask the Department of the Interior to outline what additional information or authority it needs from Congress to deploy any funds now available and to direct these dollars toward projects that ensure more water is available for use in Arizona, such as expanded capacity at the Yuma Desalting Plant, while also supporting long-term investments that add water to the Basin system.

As federal deadlines to reach an agreement pass and as Basin states position themselves for extensive litigation, it has become steadily apparent that there is little daylight left for Reclamation to secure a state-driven consensus agreement on post-2026 operating guidelines for the Colorado River. This uncertainty places 40 million Americans, 30 federally recognized Tribes, and critical national-security and food-security industries in an increasingly perilous position. Arizona's agriculture, semiconductor manufacturing, aerospace, and defense sectors all depend on reliable, long-term water supplies to sustain growth, protect supply chains, and ensure our nation's continued prosperity.

And while negotiations drag on, the condition of the Colorado River is worsening. Heat and mega-drought have intensified across the Basin. Reclamation's own projections suggest that Lakes Mead and Powell may soon approach critical levels—placing the water and hydropower that millions of Americans rely on at risk. The entire Colorado River system is interconnected,

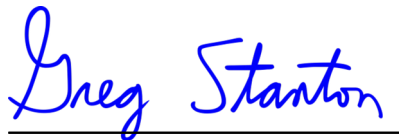
and the Upper and Lower Basins must work together to relieve the immense strain on this critical resource.

Arizona has consistently taken on the greatest conservation burdens in the Basin, making difficult sacrifices and investing more aggressively than any other state in long-term water infrastructure to ensure the reliability, security, and stability our nation depends on. Our state has demonstrated what can be achieved when water and energy investments are aligned, and these results show that further federal support will produce real, measurable benefits that strengthen Reclamation's mission and protect water resources across the entire Basin.

The Department of Interior has an important duty to responsibly manage the Colorado River system. These funds were set aside by Congress to aid the Basin states through ongoing dry conditions and provide security and safety to the communities, local economies, and critical industries that rely on the Colorado River. The end of FY2026 is rapidly approaching, and these unexpended funds may never reach the water users who will take all-important steps to reduce their use and add water to the Colorado River system.

We ask you to immediately release unexpended drought mitigation funds and allow Arizona and the other Basin states to take all necessary measures to protect one of the West's most precious resources.

Sincerely,



---

Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress



---

Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress