



November 15, 2022

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton, Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Support Memorandum of Understanding by Colorado River municipalities and public water providers

Dear Commissioner Touton,

The undersigned conservation groups support the Memorandum of Understanding issued by a collection of Colorado River municipalities and public water providers on November 15, which builds upon the initial agreement executed in August 2022. The MOU recognizes an important responsibility that cities as well as water wholesalers and providers shoulder as part of the greater Colorado River Basin community to help balance the supply and use of Colorado River water and thereby help preserve a functioning and healthy river system. We are encouraged that the MOU signatories accept that responsibility by committing to promote an ethic of wise water use and implement specific actions that have the potential to produce measurable benefits for the sake of their communities and the Basin as a whole.

As we all know, the Colorado River Basin is in crisis. The Basin no longer has the privilege of time to methodically prepare for a hotter and drier future. That future is now, and the pace and scale of solutions to successfully reduce the Basin's water supply risks must be accelerated by all members of the Colorado River community if we have any hope of assuring a sustainable Colorado River Basin going forward.

The MOU is an important step in the right direction. It provides an express pledge by members of the urban/water providers sector in both the Upper and Lower Basins to help be a part of the solution. It further documents the MOU parties' commitment to build on existing efficiency programs; meaningfully reduce non-functional turf while maintaining landscapes that benefit communities, wildlife, and the environment; increase efforts to implement reuse and recycling programs where feasible; and collaborate to advance efficiency strategies for urban, commercial, and land use planning, among other things. Achieving these commitments is a necessary first phase

to preserving the longevity of the Basin. We look forward to assisting the municipalities and public water providers in making significant progress towards these additional conservation efforts and hope that more municipalities, water wholesalers and providers will adopt similar stewardship principles so the Colorado River system can realize measurable water savings and cities and communities are better positioned to adapt to persistent drought and climate change throughout the Basin.

As part of the MOU implementation process, the undersigned conservation groups are especially interested in finding ways to: (1) quantify the water savings resulting from the MOU commitments; (2) optimize sustainable use of local water sources to minimize reliance on existing and new transbasin diversions and traditional, large-scale agricultural “buy and dry” approaches; (3) connect municipal/water provider conservation efforts with environmental and recreation/flow benefits within the Basins; (4) improve headwater ecosystems to help reduce the risk and damage of wildfires on infrastructure and clean, reliable water supplies; and (5) integrate effective water management considerations in water supply, storm water, land use and regional planning going forward.

We thank the MOU parties for recognizing they have a role to play in balancing the supply and use of Colorado River water and taking steps necessary to do their part in maintaining a functioning and healthy river system.

Sincerely,

Taylor Hawes  
*Colorado River Program Director  
The Nature Conservancy*

Bart Miller  
*Director, Healthy Rivers Program  
Western Resource Advocates*

Kevin Moran  
*Associate Vice President, Regional Affairs  
Environmental Defense Fund*

Jennifer Pitt  
*Colorado River Program Director  
National Audubon Society*

Sara Porterfield  
*Western Water Policy Advisor  
Trout Unlimited*

Matt Rice  
*Director, Colorado River Basin Program  
American Rivers*

Alex Funk  
*Senior Counsel & Director of Water Resources  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership*