

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
132 Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chair Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As the House of Representatives considers the proposed supplemental appropriations package transmitted to Congress on June 24, 2026, we urge you to include funds to address the increasingly dire condition of the Colorado River Basin. Any emergency funding package that aims to bolster our national security must recognize the immediate threat that prolonged drought and rapidly declining water levels in the Colorado River and its reservoirs pose to the millions of people whose lives and livelihoods depend on this resource. Federal investments are needed to build water supply resilience and reduce consumptive water use throughout the Colorado River Basin.

One in 10 Americans rely on the Colorado River for drinking water, and 90 percent of the United States' winter produce crops are grown using its water.¹ The River, through the Hoover and Glen Canyon Dams, also provides power for 2.5 million people.² In addition to helping meet basic needs of communities out West by supplying drinking water, serving as a power source, supporting municipal services, and helping put food on the table, the Colorado River and its related parks, forests, and recreation areas also contribute over \$26 billion to the outdoor recreation economy each year.³ In addition, the River supports critical national security industries that have taken root in the West, including in the advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and defense sectors.

We are deeply concerned that prolonged drought and increasing aridity in the Colorado River Basin are threatening Western water security and continued economic prosperity. On average, natural flow measurements on the main-stem and tributaries of the Colorado River are 20 percent

¹ <https://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/021925rivers>.

² <https://abcnews.com/US/water-supplies-colorado-river-basin-peril-experts/story?id=13310755>.

³

https://www.americanrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ColoradoRiver_MER2022_Report_Final_03302022.pdf.

less today than they were in the 20th Century. Congress must act quickly to ensure that the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has adequate resources at its disposal to mitigate the impacts of extreme drought on the Basin States.

There is precedent for such congressional action. Under similar strain in 2022, when Lakes Powell and Mead's elevations were respectively projected to be 3,512.56 feet and 1,038.16 feet by December 31, 2022, Congress provided \$4 billion to support drought mitigation efforts in the Reclamation states and territories, with priority given to the Basin states. We have no doubt that without this vital funding source, the water crisis today facing our communities would be much worse. We are therefore concerned that less than \$100 million of that federal investment remains to address the worsening water crisis in the Colorado River Basin.⁴ Because of unseasonably high spring temperatures and a record-low snowpack, Lakes Powell and Mead's elevations are projected to fall much lower, to 3,504.32 feet and 1,037.03 feet by December 31, 2026.⁵ Now is not the time to let federal support dry up.

We recommend that the supplemental appropriations package include emergency funding for water infrastructure investments and upgrades in the Colorado River Basin and that significant funding is directed towards long-term planning for water reductions, conservation, and smart augmentation measures to protect the health and future of the Colorado River.

We support efforts from the seven Colorado River Basin states, in coordination with Tribal Nations and Mexico, to negotiate a post-2026 solution. We know that a long-term agreement must recognize the natural limitations of the Colorado River. Funding is urgently needed to limit the pain that could be felt by communities across the Basin in the near term and may smooth the path forward for post-2026 operating agreements. We need to be using every tool at our disposal to prevent this crisis from getting worse.

As the House considers taking up an emergency funding package, we implore you to add Western water conservation and drought mitigation to the list of worthwhile investments. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.kjzz.org/politics/2026-06-05/federal-officials-target-mid-to-late-summer-for-a-new-colorado-river-plan>.

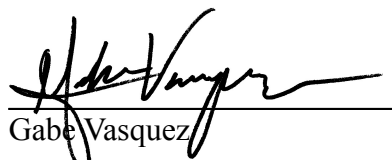
⁵ https://data.usbr.gov/rise/content-rise-public/rise/catalog-item/binary/MAY22_MIN.pdf and <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/images/PowellElevations.pdf>.



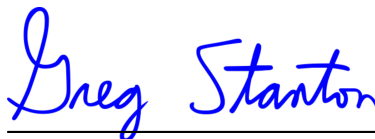
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Elijah Crane
Member of Congress



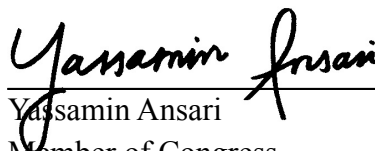
Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



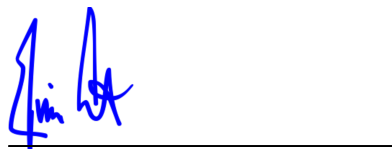
Greg Stanton
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Yassamin Ansari
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