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Congress of the United States
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September 29th, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. N.W.
Washington, D.C 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

I write regarding the [Department of the Interior's recently issued framework for future Colorado River operations](#). I appreciate the Department's work to protect the long-term viability of the Colorado River system and your willingness to engage with the Basin states, Tribes, and other stakeholders on this extraordinarily difficult challenge.

I also want to be candid: I respectfully but strongly disagree with the direction this framework takes Arizona.

Arizona cannot accept an approach that continues to place a disproportionate share of the burden on our state while other Colorado River users are comparatively insulated from mandatory reductions. Under the 2027–2028 operating guidelines, the Lower Basin faces a 1.25 million acre-foot annual reduction. Under the Lower Basin sharing arrangement, Arizona would absorb 760,000 acre-feet of that reduction, compared with 440,000 acre-feet for California and 50,000 acre-feet for Nevada. The framework also contemplates voluntary conservation and participation from the Upper Basin rather than comparable mandatory reductions.

Arizona should not continually be asked to take the biggest hit.

When Congress authorized the Central Arizona Project (CAP) in 1968, it did so with the understanding that CAP would carry junior priority among mainstream Colorado River water users. That compromise made CAP possible, but it also means Arizona already bears disproportionate vulnerability when shortages occur. We cannot ignore that history, but neither should it become a permanent justification for making Arizona the first and largest contributor whenever the river runs short.

The circumstances of Arizona today are also dramatically different from those of 1968. Arizona has grown from approximately 1.7 million residents to roughly 7.6 million people and has become one of the nation's major population and economic centers. CAP is the backbone of Colorado River water deliveries to communities and agricultural users throughout central and southern Arizona, supporting not only families and farms, but economic development and groundwater management.

Arizona's growth also has national implications. The state is home to six major active-duty military installations, including Yuma Proving Ground in my district, and plays a significant role in our national defense and defense-

industrial base. Arizona has also become a national center for semiconductor manufacturing and advanced technology, with more than [\\$319 billion in announced semiconductor investment since 2020.](#)

Reliable water supplies are therefore not simply an Arizona population issue. They are increasingly a national economic and national-security issue.

The consequences are particularly significant in Yuma and the agricultural communities along the Colorado River. These farmers produce food for Americans across the country and operate in one of the most productive agricultural regions in the nation. Arizona has conserved water, invested in infrastructure, stored water, and accepted reductions. Our communities have done their part, and they should not be expected to shoulder an ever-greater share of the burden while others avoid comparable mandatory sacrifices.

This issue is not new to me, nor are the challenges facing the Colorado River. Since first being elected to Congress, [I have consistently warned that conservation alone would not solve the West's long-term water challenges.](#) In 2020, I founded and chaired the bipartisan Colorado River Caucus, and as shortages intensified, I advocated for desalination, new water conveyance, expanded storage, aquifer recharge, public-private infrastructure partnerships, and greater federal investment in water infrastructure. In 2023 and 2024, I convened Arizona water roundtables with engineers, hydrologists, local officials, infrastructure experts, energy developers, and water authorities to examine practical solutions, including desalination, interstate water pipelines, permitting reform, and other ways to expand Arizona's long-term water portfolio. I have continued that work on the House Natural Resources Committee, [including most recently joining a bipartisan coalition of Colorado River Basin lawmakers in urging House leadership to invest in water infrastructure and long-term drought resilience.](#) I have consistently advocated for the same principle: conservation is essential, but we cannot conserve our way out of a supply problem.

I also believe we must reject the false choice between conservation and water development. Conservation is necessary, but it cannot create a single additional acre-foot of water. The federal government should aggressively pursue water augmentation, desalination, advanced water treatment, aquifer recharge, additional storage, conveyance improvements, and other projects that increase the amount of water available to the West. I appreciate that the [Department has already recognized the importance of these tools and has begun pursuing opportunities involving desalination and advanced water purification.](#)

The underlying challenge is straightforward: we are trying to manage a river whose actual flows are substantially below the assumptions on which the modern allocation system was built. Reclamation has [reported that average inflows from 2000 through 2024](#) were approximately 12.9 million acre-feet, compared with the approximately 18 million acre-feet of estimated pre-Compact average inflow.

We cannot solve a supply problem simply by deciding who gets less.

I strongly support President Trump and his administration's efforts to strengthen America's water infrastructure, expand water supplies, and protect the communities that depend on the Colorado River. I appreciate the administration's investments in Lower Basin water infrastructure and the Department's willingness to consider storage, desalination, advanced water treatment, and other projects that can improve long-term water reliability.

I am committed to working with the administration and the Department to build on these efforts and ensure that any approach recognizes the needs and contributions of all Colorado River Basin states. I offer these concerns in that spirit and with the goal of helping develop a durable solution that protects the river system while ensuring Arizona is treated fairly.

Arizona is not asking for special treatment. We are asking for equal treatment and a fair share of the responsibility.

I look forward to continuing our work together to advance an enduring solution that protects the Colorado River system, expands water supplies, and ensures Arizona is treated fairly. I believe we can address this challenge in a way that strengthens the West, supports the communities and industries that depend on the Colorado River, and advances the administration's commitment to securing America's water future.

Thank you for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Paul A. Gosar" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress