



UPPER COLORADO RIVER COMMISSION

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September 11, 2026

Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Andrea Travnicek
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240-0001

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

RE: Upper Basin Conservation and Contribution Program

Dear Assistant Secretary Andrea Travnicek,

On behalf of the Upper Division States (UDS) of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming, acting through the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC), we appreciate the Department of the Interior's progress on finalizing the grant of \$100,000,000 for the Upper Basin Conservation and Contribution Program (No. R26AC00222-00). The grant funds will support the expansion of ongoing, state-led efforts by the UDS to voluntarily contribute water to Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP) Initial Units, namely Lake Powell, Flaming Gorge Reservoir, the Aspinall Unit, and Navajo Reservoir.

To begin implementing additional contribution projects in 2027, the UCRC is working with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to complete a Grant Implementation Agreement that contains the criteria for projects across the UDS to be eligible to receive grant funds. Eligible projects will contribute quantifiable volumes of water that, but for the project, would not otherwise have been available for storage in a CRSP Initial Unit. In order to effectively implement projects, and to provide sufficient time to select projects in 2027, the Grant Implementation Agreement must be executed this fall.

In parallel, the UDS, UCRC, and Reclamation are working on a separate agreement to develop the Upper Basin Program and to address UDS water contributions in the Upper Basin. This agreement is an important component of our shared efforts to support CRSP Initial Units and the Colorado River system. Accounting and verification associated with water contributed by the UDS to CRSP Initial Units will be based on the methods developed and used in connection with the Provisional Accounting Memorandum of Understanding executed between the UCRC and Reclamation in December 2024. The methods utilized by the UDS to account for water contributed from the UDS to CRSP Initial Units were subsequently verified by Reclamation. This successful collaboration illustrates our shared commitment to contribute water to the Initial Units, particularly Lake Powell. We intend to build on that collaboration with the forthcoming agreements.

In order to establish a successful long-term Upper Basin Program, the contributions should be credited and stored in operationally neutral pools in Lake Powell and Upstream Initial Units. Storing and retaining water in Lake Powell and the Upstream Initial Units can provide enhanced infrastructure resilience and flexibility for reservoir operations. Moreover, the operational neutrality of recognized (credited) contributions is consistent with the intent of the 2019 Demand Management Storage Agreement. Operational neutrality for credited contributions will be essential to the successful implementation of a long-term an Upper Basin Program in each of the UDS. Without these elements, participation in an Upper Basin Program may be significantly limited. Accordingly, we intend to work with you so that contributions generated by the Program and stored at Lake Powell or the Upstream Initial Units will be credited and regarded as operationally neutral.

The UDS intend to discuss the two agreements with our Lower Basin counterparts and seek their input at the appropriate time, and we look forward to your support in moving these two agreements forward as quickly as possible to implement the Program in 2027.

Sincerely,

UPPER COLORADO RIVER COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles R. Cullom".

CHARLES R. CULLOM
Executive Director

Cc: Aubrey Bettencourt, Principal Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
David Palumbo, Deputy Commissioner, Operations, Bureau of Reclamation
Wayne Pullan, Upper Colorado River Basin Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation