

Hon. Greg Stanton
AZ-09
Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day Hearing

Chairwoman Kaptur, Ranking Member Simpson, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Arizona's water resource needs and the importance of federal investments through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Arizona has long been a leader in the United States when it comes to effectively managing water supplies – it's how we have managed to flourish in a desert climate for so long.

Climate change, though, presents us with significant challenges: temperatures rising even higher, less predictable, and consistent rain cycles, and more. These changes have left us in a prolonged drought in the Southwest. It's created more wildfires that threaten the entire state. The extreme heat wears on our water infrastructure and alters our watersheds. And heavy, intense rains combined with dry, hard ground makes many parts of our urban areas more prone to dangerous, life- and property-threatening flash floods.

We know the kind of infrastructure we need to adapt to these changes, but it requires federal investment – and your leadership. I've worked with community leaders—from small, rural, and tribal communities, as well as our major metro areas—to identify Arizona's highest priority projects to help us prepare for the challenges ahead. These projects address our water supply challenges, environmental infrastructure needs, and flood protection.

Securing our water future in Arizona depends on our ability to respond to the mega drought in the Colorado River Basin where we are experiencing the driest conditions in more than 1,200 years. Plummeting water levels at Lake Powell pose a serious threat to the city of Page's water supply and continued power generation at Glen Canyon Dam. And Lake Mead has

dropped so low that recreationists have found multiple human remains. The current Tier I shortage has resulted in a substantial cut to Arizona's share of the Colorado River, about 30% of Central Arizona Project's normal supply and nearly 18% of Arizona's total Colorado River allocation. In addition to these cuts, Arizona has agreed to even more conservation action under the 500+ plan, resulting in another 214,000-acre feet in voluntary water conservation this year. I appreciate subcommittee's past support for directing resources to help us implement the Drought Contingency Plan. This is essential, but we need to take even more action to conserve water as we face additional shortages. The Drought Contingency Plan directs the Secretary of the Interior to create or conserve 100,000 acre-feet per year or more of water in the Colorado River system to contribute to the conservation of water in Lake Mead. If the drought continues and leads to higher tier shortage declarations, which we fully expect, Arizona will see further cuts in water deliveries from the Colorado River. The Colorado River is the lifeblood of the Lower Basin States, providing water that is vital for drinking water in major urban areas including Phoenix and Tucson as well as a significant resource for tribes, agriculture, and industry. Historic dry conditions combined with the current prolonged drought and future effects of climate change will likely continue to contribute to significant economic, environmental, and other impacts throughout the basin. I urge the subcommittee to provide the Bureau with the resources it needs to fulfill its commitment under the Drought Contingency Plan.

Over the next two decades, Arizona will also need more than \$15 billion in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure needs, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. To begin to address these needs and the fiscal constraints of our small, rural, and tribal communities to make these investments, the 2020 Water Resources Development Act included my legislation to expand the existing Section 595 environmental infrastructure program

to include the state of Arizona. Since this authority was authorized, several communities and tribal nations have received the help they need to protect their water supply. That means new water lines for the city of Maricopa and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, infrastructure that helps the Yavapai Apache Nation use reclaimed water more efficiently, mitigating flood risk in the city of Flagstaff, and restoring the Queen Creek in the town of Superior and the list goes on. I appreciate the subcommittee's support for this authority this fiscal year and urge you to continue strong funding for environmental infrastructure so more communities and tribes in Arizona can get the assistance they need.

Although Arizona is a desert state, it is no stranger to flooding. There are several projects in need of investment to protect Arizona communities from major flood events.

First, the Cave Buttes Dam in Maricopa County provides flood protection for more than a million residents within unincorporated parts of the county as well as the cities of Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Tolleson, and Avondale in an area with \$15 billion in residential and commercial property. Unfortunately, floodwater seepage in the dam has sounded the alarm for us to reduce the dam's risk of failure.

Similarly, thousands of residents and hundreds of critical facilities, including Luke Air Force Base and Interstate 10 depend on the Agua Fria River Trilby Wash, or McMicken Dam, a 9.5-mile long earthen embankment, constructed in 1955 by the Corps of Engineers, for flood protection. But because of dam safety deficiencies, land subsidence, earth fissuring, urbanization and non-compliance with current dam safety standards, the dam's ability to maintain its current level of protection is questionable at best.

We must begin new feasibility studies for both Cave Buttes Dam and Agua Fria River Trilby Wash so the Corps of Engineers can investigate flood risk management needs as well as

potential improvements to improve the safety of the two dams so we can strengthen flood risk protection for the region.

The second critical flood control project is Tres Rios, an ongoing ecosystem restoration project along the Salt and Gila River corridors in Phoenix, that is a part of Rio Reimagined, an Urban Waters Partnership Project. Completing Tres Rios would improve the low flow channel for flow conveyance and support native riparian habitat, remove aggressive invasive species like the salt cedar, which consumes large amounts of water, and improve native biodiversity and wildlife habitat. I appreciate the subcommittee providing funding this fiscal year for the post authorization change report, and I look forward to working with you to secure the federal funds necessary to complete this project.

The third project is Rio Salado Oeste, another ecosystem restoration project that is part of Rio Reimagined. Rio Salado Oeste would connect Tres Rios and Rio Salado to create a contiguous 19-mile restored river corridor. The project would improve the river's channel to better manage flood risk and restore habitat. Unfortunately, the project has been on hold since 2009. I would ask the subcommittee to provide funding for the Corps to conduct a general re-evaluation report so this project can be restarted.

And finally, the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP), which is authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1948, provides the Corps of Engineers the authority to solve water-resource, flood-risk mitigation and environmental restoration challenges in partnership with local sponsors without the need to obtain specific Congressional authorization. By cutting the amount of time required to budget, develop, and approve a potential project for construction, this program helps the Corps more efficiently plan and build projects that are smaller, less complex, and less costly. Arizona has several of these projects, and I am particularly interested in Section 205 for

small flood risk management projects and Section 206 for aquatic ecosystem restoration projects. Right now, though, the CAP program is overextended and underfunded. For example, Section 205 received only \$10 million this fiscal year but is authorized for up to \$69.3 million and Section 206 was funded at \$11 million and is authorized for \$63 million. I'm hopeful that the subcommittee can increase the size of these CAP programs to help these smaller projects.

Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your support for critical investment in our nation's water infrastructure.