

Hon. Greg Stanton
AZ-04
Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day Hearing

Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Member Kaptur, 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 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. Last year, the Lower Colorado River Basin was in a Tier 2a shortage, which resulted in a 592,000-acre-foot reduction to Arizona's Colorado River supply, constituting 34%

of Central Arizona Project's normal supply and 21% of our Colorado River supply. In 2024, the Basin is in a Tier 1 shortage, representing a 512,000-acre-foot reduction to Arizona's Colorado River water supply. In addition to these cuts, Arizona and other Lower Basin states have agreed to conserve an additional 3-million-acre feet of Colorado River water through 2026. I appreciate subcommittee's past support for directing resources to help us implement the Drought Contingency Plan, which 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. 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 \$100 million in fiscal year 2025 to fulfill its obligations 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, more than two dozen communities and tribal nations have received assistance to address their water infrastructure needs. That means new water lines for the city of Maricopa and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, infrastructure that helps the Yavapai Apache Nation and the city of Tempe use reclaimed water

more efficiently and flood risk management in the city of Flagstaff. I appreciate the subcommittee's support for this authority this fiscal year and urge you to continue strong funding for environmental infrastructure in fiscal year 2025 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. We must begin a new feasibility study so the Corps of Engineers can investigate flood risk management needs as well as potential modifications to improve the dam's safety so we can strengthen flood risk protection for the region.

The second project is Rio Salado Oeste, an ecosystem restoration project that is part of Rio Reimagined. Rio Salado Oeste would restore nearly 1,500 acres of riparian and flood plain habitat while connecting two existing projects to create a contiguous 19-mile corridor along the Salt River through Phoenix. I appreciate your support for this project in this year's bill and ask that you provide the remaining funds necessary in fiscal year 2025 to complete the general re-evaluation report.

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, including McCormick Wash in the city of Globe, Rose and Palm Garden washes in the city of Douglas, Va Shly'AY Akimel on the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and the Ak-Chin levee in Pinal County. 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 \$12 million this fiscal year but is authorized for up to \$69.3 million and Section 206 was funded at \$8 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.

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