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February 17, 2022

U.S. House of Representatives, Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Natural Resources Committee,

I am the university director of the Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center (SW CASC) and, on behalf of the members of the SW CASC consortium, I write to indicate strong support for H.R. 6654, the Climate Adaptation Science Centers Act (CASC Act).

As with the other regional climate adaptation science centers (CASCs), the SW CASC is a partnership between the U.S. Geological Survey and a consortium of research institutions in a region encompassing Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. The SW CASC consortium includes the University of Arizona (host institution), Colorado State University, Desert Research Institute, Scripps Institution of Oceanography at University of California-San Diego, University of California-Davis, University of California-Los Angeles, and Utah State University. In addition, through our partner, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), the Bureau of Indian Affairs funds a Tribal Climate Resilience Liaison who works closely with the SW CASC.

The aforementioned partnerships fuse the capabilities of the nation's most trusted and exacting federal scientific enterprise focused on earth and environmental sciences, the USGS, with the disciplinary breadth of universities and research institutions and their range of partnerships with a wide array of civil society organizations and government agencies, along with the trust and relationships with tribal communities stewarded by AIHEC.

The most important aspects of the program of national and regional CASCs are our focus and the way in which we operate: the CASCs focus on the development of *science in service* of natural and cultural resource managers, and we work in partnership with managers, to ensure that the products of our work are both useful and usable—*actionable science*. This method of working is highly appealing to our resource management partners and serves to strengthen both the science and the usability of the science, thus making the most efficient use of the federal government investment in earth and environmental science.

Since 2011, the SW CASC has partnered with natural and cultural resources managers across Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah to develop research and information that can meet the needs of the Department of Interior, State, Tribal and local agencies for relevant, usable, actionable science. Our work has addressed the highest priority challenges and research needs expressed by natural resource managers in our region, such as quantifying the character and effects of recent and historic drought on Colorado River streamflow, measuring the historical and projected impacts of sea level rise on California's coastal marshes, and facilitating knowledge exchange and research planning partnerships among climate and fire researchers and forest and fire managers across both the interior Southwest and southern California.

Moreover, our fellowship program brings together early career researchers, from multiple disciplines, and provides them with training in conducting team science and the opportunity to work with stakeholders in our region to provide actionable scientific products.

Despite our successes, the SW CASC and the CASC program have faced numerous challenges, including demand for our science and services that outstrips our current capacities, delays in the timely processing of funding within the Department of Interior, and delays or lack of ability within the USGS to hire sufficient personnel to staff a fully effective program. These challenges are not merely daunting, they serve to hamper this important program and undermine the trust that the CASCs have developed with management partners and stakeholders.

The most important aspect of H.R. 6654 is to establish the CASCs in law, to create consistency and continuity of the centers across changes in administrations. Currently the centers are established by secretarial orders which can be rescinded by any Secretary of the Interior (as has happened to other climate-focused Federal programs). Congressional authorization is important for consistency of research, our abilities to serve natural and cultural resource managers, and our fellowship and training programs.

Additionally, the CASC Act will:

- reinstate a Federal Advisory Committee to better inform the CASC program;
- authorize appropriations to provide long-term stability of funding for the CASC network;
- increase flexibility to conduct new research, provide education and training, and work with other agencies and institutions, and
- create consistent and timely grant processing.

In summary, the CASC Act will secure the CASC progam's operations, enable the SW CASC and the national and regional CASC program to flexibly address the needs of natural and cultural resource managers, provide training to stakeholders and contribute to the development of a more responsive and functional earth and environmental science workforce in the United States. I strongly support the CASC Act.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Garfin
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Director, Arizona Institutes for Resilience, Science Translation and Outreach
Associate Professor and Associate Extension Specialist, School of Natural Resources and the Environment

USGS science for a changing world
Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Arizona
Colorado State University
DRI Desert Research Institute
Scripps Institution of Oceanography UC San Diego
UC Davis University of California
UCLA
Utah State University