



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

February 16, 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chair, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Huffman:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Department of the Interior to written questions submitted following the appearance of the Department's witness, Tanya Trujillo, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science, at the October 15, 2021, oversight hearing entitled *Colorado River Drought Conditions and Response Measures – Day One*. We apologize for the delay in our response.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record
Hearing on *Colorado River Drought Conditions and Response*
Measures – Day One
House Committee on Natural Resources
October 15, 2021

Questions from Rep. Mike Levin

- 1. As I'm sure you are aware the shutdown of the Paradox Valley Unit has caused salinity concerns for water districts in California that receive Colorado River water. What is the Bureau doing to address this salinity issue?**

Response: The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has been working to address salinity concerns within the Colorado River Basin through its participation with many partners in the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program. According to Reclamation's 2019 Quality of Water Report, as of 2017 Reclamation removes approximately 480,000 tons of salt annually from the Colorado River, not including Paradox Valley. We are also exploring options to expand investment in the Basin-wide program for further salinity control in the Basin.

In regard to the Paradox Valley Unit, on March 4, 2019, operations at the Paradox injection well were suspended to analyze the largest earthquake to date and assess the risk of continued operations. Because the earthquake was near the threshold for causing damage to the surrounding community, Reclamation management decided to evaluate risks before continuing operations. Reclamation is performing analyses to quantitatively evaluate seismic risks associated with continued operation of the Paradox Valley Unit. These analyses will take an in-depth look at the seismic hazard potential and the potential for resulting damage. As the analyses are ongoing however, Reclamation is evaluating the operation of the Paradox Injection Well at a reduced operating capacity. Reclamation is also exploring other options for salinity control within the Paradox Valley.

- 2. Under what timeline will you be carrying out the actions you highlighted?**

Response: Expanded investment in the Basin-wide salinity control program will continue during fiscal year 2022. The seismic and risk analyses should be completed in 2023. A possible Paradox Injection Well test run is being evaluated for 2022.