United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 20 2026

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Hageman:

Enclosed are responses to questions for the record submitted to the Department's witness, Scott Cameron, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, following his appearance before your Subcommittee at the May 20, 2026, oversight hearing. These responses were prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Barkin
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Val Hoyle
Ranking Member

Unitred States Department of the Interior

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Questions for the Record
House Natural Resources Committee
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee
Oversight Hearing on "*The Reclamation Federal Program's Next Century*"
May 20, 2026

Questions from Representative Crank

Question 1: A component of the congressionally authorized Drought Contingency Plan is the Drought Response Operation Agreement between the Upper Basin States and Reclamation. The DROA is a cooperative agreement between the States and Reclamation and has been successfully exercised including this very challenging year. Can you explain how Reclamation intends to continue the cooperative framework established under the DROA in the post-2026 operating regime, and how the Upper Basin States will be involved in future operational decisions?

Response: This year's Drought Response Operation Agreement (DROA) Plan under the current agreement extends through April 2027. Although there is not yet agreement among the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basin states on post-2026 operations, the Department's Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) continues to believe that responsible, near-term water management tools, such as additional releases are crucial for the safe and effective operations of the system. In addition, Congress has authorized Reclamation to operate federal facilities in response to hydrologic conditions and for system protection in emergency conditions.

Question 2: What statutory authority is Reclamation relying on for the basis of its emergency authority to draw down the Upper Initial Units that were developed for the benefit and use of the Upper Basin States?

Response: Congress authorized the Secretary to plan, construct, and operate federal facilities and take actions in response to hydrologic conditions and for system protection in emergency conditions in: the 1956 Colorado River Storage Project Act (Public Law 84-485), specific to the four Upper Initial Units; Section 1(2) of the 1970 Criteria for the Coordinated Long-Range Operation of Colorado River Reservoirs, adopted pursuant to the Colorado River Basin Project Act of September 30, 1968 (Public Law 90-537); Sections 6 and 7(D) of the 2007 Interim Guidelines; Sections II(A)(3)G) and II (A)(4)(e) of the 2019 DROA; and Section 6(E) of the 2024 Supplement to the 2007 Interim Guidelines; among other laws and adopted planning documents.

Question 3: Given that the USGS 3D Elevation Program (3DEP) and 3D Hydrography Program (3DHP) produce high-resolution elevation and hydrography data that map the nation's hydrography, is Reclamation currently participating, or planning to participate, by contributing funding to these programs? Both programs appear to directly support the Bureau's mission in water resources management, dam safety, flood risk reduction, drought planning, and infrastructure resilience. Specifically, does Reclamation have a plan to benefit from improved access to more robust, high-quality 3DHP datasets—particularly by making such data readily available to public-sector applicants for Reclamation's WaterSMART grant programs?

Response: Reclamation works closely and collaboratively with our federal partners including the Department's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Specifically, Reclamation utilizes 3DEP for reservoir capacity modeling and erosion detection. More broadly, Reclamation is an active participant in the 3D National Topography Model Working Group working alongside the USGS to establish national strategies for water-related reporting, mapping, and hydrologic observing networks.