



March 23, 2022

Chairman Schatz
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Vice Chair Murkowski
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

cc Senator Mark Kelly

RE: S. 3308, the Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act of 2021

Dear Chairman Schatz and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We write today in support of S. 3308, and appreciate Senator Kelly's leadership and foresight in introducing this legislation with Senator Sinema that will provide the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) with greater authority to use and manage their Colorado River water rights. We believe it is needed even more urgently than it was last year, when we first offered our support for this proposal. Drought and climate threats continue to worsen each year. Last week, NOAA issued its U.S. Spring Outlook, and for the second year in a row, forecasters "...predict prolonged, persistent drought in the West where below-average precipitation is most likely." Last August, the Secretary of the Interior declared the first-ever Tier 1 shortage for Colorado River operations in the Lower Colorado River Basin. The Lower Basin shortage, which began on January 1 of this year, will result in a substantial cut to Arizona's share of the Colorado River.

Policy must evolve and adapt to meet growing water security threats. By authorizing CRIT to assume greater agency over its Colorado River allotment, S. 3308 will allow them to engage in partnerships, if they so choose, that improve flexible management of Colorado River water within Arizona and the Lower Basin to help meet today's challenges.

Meaningful participation by tribes in the Colorado River Basin has been crucial to the recent success of river operations and programs. However, many tribes face institutional, policy, and legal barriers to fully realizing and making use of their unique water rights. This legislation will empower CRIT with flexibility to engage in water discussions and negotiations with a broader set of tools to use at their sovereign discretion. We strongly support its passage.

Sincerely,



Chris Kuzdas, Arizona Program Manager
Environmental Defense Fund
& Co-Chair, Water for Arizona Coalition



Haley Paul, Policy Director
National Audubon Society
& Co-Chair, Water for Arizona Coalition



Kim Mitchell, Senior Water Policy Advisor
Healthy Rivers Program
Western Resource Advocates



Sinjin Eberle, Communications Director,
Intermountain West
American Rivers



Todd Reeve, Director
Business for Water Stewardship

The Water for Arizona Coalition is a group of five conservation organizations – American Rivers, National Audubon Society, Business for Water Stewardship, Environmental Defense Fund, and Western Resource Advocates – that supports policies and innovative practices to ensure a reliable water supply to meet the state's needs. Collectively, we have over 60,000 Arizona members, as well as hundreds of hunter, angler, business, and outdoor recreation partners around the state. The coalition was recognized as an Arizona Capitol Times "2020 Leader of the Year" for our efforts to protect Arizona's most valuable resource. Learn more at waterforarizona.com

