



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Established in 1918 as a public agency

GENERAL MANAGER
Jim Barrett

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Robert Cheng

CLERK OF THE BOARD
Sylvia Bermudez

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Dan Charlton

September 10, 2024

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
1324-A Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Chairman
U.S. House Subcommittee on Water,
Wildlife, and Fisheries
1522 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
U.S. House Subcommittee on Water,
Wildlife, and Fisheries
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Grijalva, Chairman Bentz, and Ranking Member Huffman:

On behalf of Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), I write in support of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) legislation introduced today by Senator Alex Padilla (CA), Congressman Ken Calvert (CA-41), and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano (CA-31). CVWD requests your support for this legislation to move swiftly through the legislative process.

The legislation would establish an interest-bearing account at the U.S. Department of the Treasury to hold the funds contributed annually by the states of Arizona, California, and Nevada for the LCR MSCP. The LCR MSCP was authorized by Congress in 2009 as a collaborative effort involving the federal government, States, Tribes, and local water, power, and wildlife agencies. Its goal is to establish 8,000 acres of native riparian and aquatic habitat along the Colorado River between Lake Mead and the U.S.–Mexico border. To date, the program has successfully established 5,000 acres of new riparian habitat, stocked native fish, increased the breeding numbers of migratory birds, and expanded our understanding of local wildlife and habitat restoration through a science-based management approach.

The LCR MSCP funds its work through a \$626 million budget for its 50-year term, based on 2005 estimates. In FY24, the federal budget allocated \$38.8 million for funding, with state participants

contributing \$19.4 million. However, over time, the pace of funding has outstripped work expenditures, leading the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) to accumulate over \$60 million in contributed funds for future costs. Currently, these funds are held in an account that does not earn interest. This legislation would permit USBR to deposit these funds in an interest-bearing account, effectively leveraging taxpayer dollars to support this crucial work for future generations.

Established in 1918, CVWD was formed with the core mission of safeguarding and preserving water resources, primarily for agricultural irrigation purposes. CVWD has evolved into a multifaceted agency serving a vast area of approximately 1,000 square miles stretching from the San Geronio Pass to the Salton Sea, predominantly within Riverside County but also including portions of Imperial and San Diego counties. Today, CVWD offers a wide array of water-related services, including delivering irrigation and drinking water, groundwater replenishment, storm water protection, wastewater treatment and recycling, and promoting water conservation.

As you may know, nearly 40 million people rely on water from the Colorado River to sustain their livelihoods, and a healthy Colorado River makes life and agriculture possible in the Coachella Valley. CVWD was allocated 432,850 acre-feet of federally contracted Colorado River water in 2022, of which approximately 260,000 acre-feet served local farms within the Valley. These farms overall crop production annually exceeds half a billion dollars. The remaining portion of this vital water supply serves a diverse range of purposes, including environmental mitigation efforts, groundwater replenishment initiatives, large-scale landscape irrigation, and collaboration with other agencies. Effective management of the Colorado River, and the substitution of healthy ecosystems on the River, is critical for the communities dependent on its water.

Thank you, once again, for your consideration to bolster the long-term financial footing of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program. This program is transformative in protecting the species in the conservation area. We hope to earn your support for this important legislation and look forward to seeing it enacted into law.

Sincerely,



J. M. Barrett
General Manager

cc: The Honorable Alex Padilla
The Honorable Ken Calvert
The Honorable Grace Napolitano