



Via Electronic Mail

June 30, 2025

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chair, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Chuck Fleischman
Chair, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives

Re: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Program Funding

Dear Chairman Kennedy, Chairman Fleischman, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Kaptur:

On behalf of the Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group (CVRWMG), I respectfully urge your support for continued funding for U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) WaterSMART Program.

The CVRWMG includes the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), Coachella Water Authority/Coachella Sanitary District (CWA), Desert Water Agency (DWA), Indio Water Authority (IWA), Mission Springs Water District (MSWD), and Valley Sanitary District (VSD). The group represents a collaborative effort to implement the Coachella Valley Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan. IRWM is a collaborative effort to identify and implement water management solutions on a regional scale that

increase regional self-reliance, reduce conflict, and build long-term water security and resiliency. The CVRWMG's region is located in central Riverside County, California.

The Coachella Valley, like many areas in the West, is subject to frequent drought conditions due to the region's arid climate and drought emergencies. The region relies on water from the Colorado River to replenish and sustainably maintain the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin. However, the Colorado River is facing significant challenges due to prolonged droughts. In August 2022, the Department of Interior declared a Tier 2 shortage for the Colorado River, prompting California to voluntarily reduce its water use. In November 2022, CVWD approved two voluntary actions to reduce Colorado River replenishment from 2022 to 2025. This reduction will impact our region's water supply reliability, as imported water is crucial to replenishing the Coachella Valley Groundwater Basin.

Federal Funding from the WaterSMART Program has been instrumental in addressing these issues by providing critical funding for water conservation, infrastructure improvements, and sustainable water management practices. The CVRWMG agencies have benefited significantly from the WaterSMART Program, securing grants that implemented projects that improved regional water resilience. While we recognize and appreciate the commitment to fiscal responsibility and reducing Federal expenditures, proposed cuts to the WaterSMART Program could unintentionally impact progress in infrastructure improvements, drought resilience, and sustainable water management across the western United States.

A specific example of the benefit of this funding is MSWD's Palm Springs Crest and West Palm Springs Village Intertie Project – Planning Phase, which received \$358,010 through the WaterSMART Planning and Project Design Grants Program, which will be impacted if the WaterSMART Program is eliminated. MSWD plans to connect two groundwater systems serving 885 residents in Palm Springs Crest and West Palm Springs Village, both economically vulnerable communities with no backup water supply. Without continued WaterSMART Program funding, these communities could remain vulnerable during well failures, droughts, or power outages.

Another critical project that could be impacted is VSD's Recycled Water Treatment Plant, which received \$280,439 through the WaterSMART: Water Recycling and Desalination Planning Program, VSD is developing a feasibility study to plan upgrades to its water reclamation facility for producing recycled water suitable for groundwater recharge and irrigation. Without funding from the WaterSMART Program, the Coachella Valley region will continue to rely on limited and less reliable water sources, leaving it more vulnerable to the impacts of drought.

Continued support for the WaterSMART Program is vital for maintaining the progress we have made and for addressing future water challenges. I urge you to advocate for continued funding for the WaterSMART program to assist us in addressing water supply reliability in the upcoming budget discussions. Investing in the WaterSMART Program is an investment in the sustainability and resilience of our water resources, which is critical for the well-being of the communities we serve.

Thank you for your leadership in this matter. I appreciate your ongoing commitment to supporting initiatives that benefit our region and look forward to your continued advocacy.

Sincerely,



Joanne Le

On behalf of the Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group

Director of Environmental Services

Coachella Valley Water District

CVRWMG agency representatives:

Steve Johnson, Desert Water Agency

Ron Buchwald, Valley Sanitary District

Castulo Estrada, Coachella Water Authority

Reymundo Trejo, Indio Water Authority

Marion Champion, Mission Springs Water District