

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3—
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

(ON BEHALF OF THE JOINT INTERIM STANDING
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES)

MARCH 6, 2023

Referred to Committee on Natural Resources

SUMMARY—Urges the United States Bureau of Reclamation to consider certain actions, alternatives and measures for the protection and management of the Colorado River. (BDR R-349)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State: No.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in ***bolded italics*** is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging the United States Bureau of Reclamation to consider certain actions, alternatives and measures for the protection and management of the Colorado River.

WHEREAS, The Colorado River is the most vital water source in Nevada and much of the western United States, sustaining the life and livelihood of 7 western states, 22 Indian tribes and Mexico; and

WHEREAS, The Colorado River supports the needs of 40 million people in the United States and Mexico, irrigates over 5 million acres of land, generates hydropower for several million people and supports recreational and tourism industries; and

WHEREAS, Ninety percent of Southern Nevada's water supply comes from the Colorado River via Lake Mead; and

WHEREAS, Facing unprecedented drought and aridification, the Colorado River is in crisis with Lake Mead currently at 28 percent capacity; and

WHEREAS, The Colorado River is also overallocated with more water committed for use than is available from the Colorado River



1 in an average year resulting in a structural deficit in the Colorado
2 River; and

3 WHEREAS, The seven Colorado River Basin states of Arizona,
4 California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming
5 have yet to reach a consensus on a plan to decrease current water
6 use; and

7 WHEREAS, The Federal Government intends to take unilateral
8 action regarding the management of the Colorado River if the
9 Colorado River Basin states do not present a reasonable plan for
10 water management; and

11 WHEREAS, The Southern Nevada Water Authority and the
12 Colorado River Commission, on behalf of the State of Nevada, have
13 urged all users of the Colorado River in every state and sector to
14 work together towards a solution to the water crisis and to reduce
15 water demands to reflect the hydrological reality of the Colorado
16 River Basin; and

17 WHEREAS, In August 2022, the Southern Nevada Water
18 Authority, on behalf of the State of Nevada, submitted a letter to the
19 United States Bureau of Reclamation listing 12 recommendations to
20 address the crisis on the Colorado River, including adopting
21 methods to account for evaporation and system losses in the
22 Colorado River and investing in long-term, durable water
23 conservation to permanently reduce the structural deficit in the
24 Colorado River; and

25 WHEREAS, In November 2022, the United States Bureau of
26 Reclamation announced its intention to prepare a supplemental
27 environmental impact statement for the December 2007 Record of
28 Decision entitled "Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower
29 Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and
30 Lake Mead"; and

31 WHEREAS, In December 2022, the Southern Nevada Water
32 Authority and the Colorado River Commission, on behalf of the
33 State of Nevada, submitted a proposed alternative to the United
34 States Bureau of Reclamation for consideration in the supplemental
35 environmental impact statement process that presented
36 recommendations to address the structural deficit in the Colorado
37 River; and

38 WHEREAS, In January 2023, representatives of Nevada joined
39 with the representatives of five other Colorado River Basin states to
40 submit to the United States Bureau of Reclamation a Consensus-
41 Based Modeling Alternative to help stabilize the water levels of
42 Lake Mead and Lake Powell and asked the Bureau to consider and
43 model the Consensus-Based Modeling Alternative in the
44 supplemental environmental impact statement process; and



* S J R 3 R 1 *

1 WHEREAS, The recommendations of Nevada and the Consensus-
2 Based Modeling Alternative to address the Colorado River crisis
3 present a solid starting point for further discussions on the
4 management of the Colorado River; and

5 WHEREAS, The current Colorado River crisis is dire but solvable
6 if the Colorado River Basin States, the Federal Government and
7 Mexico cooperate to address the crisis; and

8 WHEREAS, Federal money and other funding mechanisms can
9 aid with short-term water management and prevent the future
10 depletion of the already depleted Colorado River, but the long-term
11 sustainability of the Colorado River system requires the investment
12 of additional money to implement permanent reductions in demand
13 for Colorado River water; now, therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
15 NEVADA, JOINTLY, That the members of the 82nd Session of the
16 Nevada Legislature strongly support the pursuit of a collaboration-
17 based framework to address the structural deficit in the Colorado
18 River; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the members of the 82nd Session of the
20 Nevada Legislature support the inclusion of mechanisms to account
21 for evaporation and system losses in the Colorado River in the
22 future management of the Colorado River; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That the members of the 82nd Session of the
24 Nevada Legislature hereby urge the United States Bureau of
25 Reclamation to amend existing federal regulations to prohibit the
26 inefficient delivery, application or use of any water from the
27 Colorado River by all sectors and users of water from the Colorado
28 River to limit unnecessary water losses on the Colorado River; and
29 be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and
31 transmit a copy of this resolution to the United States Secretary of
32 the Interior, the United States Commissioner of the Bureau of
33 Reclamation and the Nevada Congressional Delegation; and be it
34 further

35 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon
36 passage.

