

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0309

August 16, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

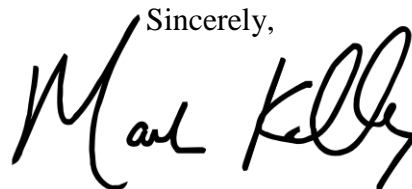
The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

I write to request that the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power hold an oversight hearing to examine the impact of the Level 1 drought declaration on the Colorado River.

On Monday, August 16, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation issued its first ever drought shortage declaration for the Colorado River. The most recent 24-month projection produced by Reclamation found that the Upper Basin experienced only 26 percent of its average annual runoff in 2021 due to an exceptionally dry spring, despite near-average snowfall last winter. This shortage declaration will have direct consequences for the annual operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead for the foreseeable future. As of today, total Colorado River system storage is 40% of capacity, down from 49% at this time last year.

More than 40 million Americans rely on Colorado River water to support our cities, tribes, and farms. Hundreds of thousands of homes in the West depend on clean electrical generation at Hoover Dam, Glen Canyon Dam, and other Colorado River hydropower facilities. I respectfully request that the Subcommittee hold this hearing with the goal of ensuring that federal resources and stakeholder engagement is continuing to offer a path forward for addressing drought on the Colorado River.

Sincerely,


Mark Kelly
United States Senate