

November 24, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As you prepare to complete the 116th Congress and address many critical national needs in the remaining days of 2020, including potential additional actions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and funding the government for the remainder of fiscal year 2021, we ask you to prioritize water resources legislation for final passage. Congress has produced the legislation described below in a deliberate and bipartisan fashion to respond to the needs of people and the environment. We urge you to approve this legislation before the end of the year so that it can be signed into law.

Both the Senate and House of Representatives produced legislation this congress—S.3591, the America's Water Infrastructure Act and H.R.7575, the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, respectively— to modernize water resources management at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps). Both bills authorize critical water resources projects and facilitate the use of natural infrastructure at the Corps to more fully realize the range and magnitude of benefits associated with natural and nature-based solutions. While we await the result of House-Senate negotiations on legislation for the Corps, we are confident that the good work of both chambers will produce an even stronger final bill that deserves passage in 2020, continuing Congress' tradition of passing such legislation every two years.

In addition, Congress has processed several bills with bipartisan support that respond to the many needs of tribal communities and western states' water supply needs and are ready for final passage. Legislation benefiting tribal communities includes but is not limited to:

- The Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act, which will provide essential water infrastructure funding to the Navajo Nation and greater certainty for management of the Colorado River in the State of Utah by quantifying the Navajo Nation's water rights;

- The Aamodt Litigation Settlement Completion Act, which will ensure the Bureau of Reclamation has funding and time to implement its obligations under the 2010 Aamodt Litigation Settlement Act; and
- The Indian Water Rights Settlement Fund Extension, which will provide a reliable funding source for future Indian water rights settlements.

Several other pieces of legislation will provide for a more balanced approach to providing 21st century western water infrastructure, water supply security, and ecological resiliency. The bills focus on conservation and drought response funding that will help the West adjust to shifts in water availability and the changing climate. We support legislation that has advanced in both chambers to:

- Reorient grant programs at the Bureau of Reclamation towards multi-benefit projects, including projects that benefit the environment, by making nongovernmental conservation organizations eligible to receive the grants and making natural infrastructure projects eligible project types;
- Reauthorize and enhance the Cooperative Watershed Management Act; and
- Authorize various aquatic ecosystem restoration efforts at the Bureau of Reclamation.

We understand the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction have reached agreement on a bipartisan, noncontroversial package of tribal water and water supply legislation including the legislation described above as well as other important provisions. Members of Congress and interested stakeholders have spent years arriving at this consensus path forward. We urge you to seize this opportunity to address myriad water supply needs by attaching these provisions to any appropriate legislative vehicle in the next work period.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



James M. Hague

CC: Senator John Barrasso
Senator Tom Carper
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Joe Manchin
Representative Steny Hoyer
Representative Peter DeFazio
Representative Sam Graves
Representative Raul Grijalva
Representative Rob Bishop