



Colorado River Indian Tribes Endorse Drought Contingency Plan Legislation Before Congress

(PARKER, AZ.) The tribal government for the Colorado River Indian Tribes is strongly endorsing the bi-partisan Drought Contingency Plan legislation before Congress and is urging its passage. On March 25th, a delegation of Tribal Council members met with Arizona's congressional delegation, California's delegation as well as representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Reclamation.

During that trip, various members of Congress and Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman thanked CRIT for their contributions in Arizona and their efforts in DC to get the Drought Contingency Plan passed.

The federal legislation is sponsored by Arizona's U.S. Senator Martha McSally and Arizona U.S. Representative Raul Grijalva. The CRIT Tribal Council has met with both lawmakers and numerous other officials as the legislation was being drafted. As recently as last month, Senator McSally travelled to Parker and met with Tribal Council Chairman Dennis Patch and members of the Tribal Council.

On March 27th, the following statement from Chairman Patch was entered into the congressional record in support of the federal Drought Contingency Plan legislation:

"The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) have been an active participant in the DCP deliberations in the State of Arizona. We support enactment of legislation authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to sign and implement the DCP Agreements. We urge this Committee to provide the Department with this authority without delay."

Under the DCP the lower Colorado River basin states including Arizona would voluntarily give up water to keep water levels in Lake Mead and Lake Powell from dropping to critical levels. CRIT has a major role in Arizona's compliance. When approved by Congress CRIT will contribute 50,000-acre feet a year for three years. That water would be stored in Lake Mead to help maintain water levels.

CRIT Chairman Dennis Patch said, “The people of the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) live on the river. It has provided for us for many generations. The Drought Contingency Plan before Congress represents a much-needed preservation plan to save the life of the river. It will benefit CRIT, the state of Arizona, and the millions who rely on this valuable resource. In the interest of conservation, we have already fallowed many acres of farmland, leaving our water in Lake Mead and expanding native habitat on our reservation. CRIT supports the DCP and hopes Congress will do the same.”

Vice Chairman Keith Moses said, “CRIT has a very important seat at the table as the federal government works to resolve the current drought crisis. This plan before Congress provides a positive path forward.”

CRIT has the first priority decreed water right to divert 719,248 acre-feet per year to serve lands in both Arizona and California. However, system inefficiencies in the BIA Colorado River Irrigation Project and a lack of infrastructure for agriculture development prevent the Tribes from fully utilizing its water. The Tribal Council is optimistic that funding received from System Conservation can provide a start toward improving water infrastructure and will improve the economic opportunities on the reservation, and off.

About the Colorado River Indian Tribes:

The Colorado River Indian Tribes include four distinct Tribes - the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo. There are currently about 4,434 Tribal members. The CRIT Reservation was created in 1865 by the Federal Government for “Indians of the Colorado River and its tributaries,” originally for the Mohave and Chemehuevi, who had inhabited the area for centuries. People of the Hopi and Navajo Tribes were relocated to the reservation in later years. The reservation stretches along the Colorado River on both the Arizona and California side. It includes approximately 300,000 acres of land, with the river serving as the focal point and lifeblood of the area.