

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0309

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Camille Touton
Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland and Commissioner Touton:

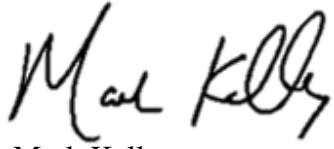
We are writing to request that you utilize a portion of drought mitigation funding provided by the Inflation Reduction Act to assist farming communities in the Colorado River Basin to invest in gravity-powered micro-irrigation systems, automation of water deliveries, reuse of brackish drainage water, and other technologies and practices that can significantly improve on-farm water efficiencies.

The U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation have unprecedented resources that can assist farming communities in the Colorado River Basin to voluntarily transition, where practicable, from flood irrigation to water-efficient and energy-efficient drip irrigation and implement other water conservation practices. Doing so will save significant amounts of Colorado River water while avoiding the harmful impacts of fallowing. If farmers continue to maintain and operate these systems, water savings generated by the use of micro-irrigation, automation, or other technology would be replicated year after year, while avoiding the social, economic and food security repercussions of fallowing productive farmland.

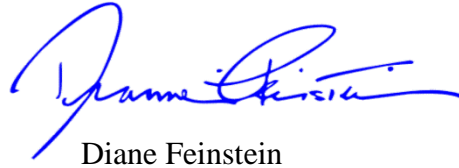
Installing gravity-powered micro-irrigation technology on a fraction of the approximately 6 million acres of flood irrigated agriculture lands in Colorado River Basin states, the vast majority of which is located in Colorado River Basin, could generate substantial water savings. Advocates for gravity-powered micro-irrigation technologies believe they could save 2 to 2.5 acre-feet per year per acre annually compared to flood irrigation, and increase yields by up to 33 percent while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent or more. We would support federal funding for basin-wide demonstration projects to test these technologies and how they work in different locations and soil types. Some of these technologies can be used on water-intensive field and commodity crops, including alfalfa, cotton, corn, and rice. Given the significant benefits of changing the way farmers use water in the drought-stricken West, Reclamation should provide substantial incentives to farmers to test the implementation of innovative improvements in water efficiency, and where appropriate, adopt them.

We believe these investments could help reduce water demands within the Colorado River Basin both immediately and in the long term. We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Diane Feinstein
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator