

CORY GARDNER
4TH DISTRICT, COLORADO

ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
ENERGY AND POWER SUBCOMMITTEE
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SUBCOMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0604
December 13, 2012

213 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4676

123 NORTH COLLEGE AVENUE, SUITE 220
FORT COLLINS, CO 80524
(970) 221-7110

822 7TH STREET, #9
GREELEY, CO 80631
(970) 351-6007

301 5TH STREET
LAMAR, CO 81052
(719) 931-4003

109½ SOUTH 3RD STREET
STERLING, CO 80751
(970) 522-0203

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 5665
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Michael L. Connor
Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street, NW, Room 7654
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Jo Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Salazar, Commissioner Connor, and Assistant Secretary Darcy:

Yesterday's release of the Colorado River Basin Study projected a water shortfall of more than 3.2 million acre-feet by 2060. The Colorado River Basin Study highlights that demand will outpace supply in the near future, making it imperative we start construction on new water storage infrastructure immediately. There are many projects far along in planning and permitting stages, including projects like the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) in Colorado, that are simply waiting for approval. Many, like NISP, are locally funded as well. These projects would mean hundreds of thousands of acrefeet of new storage, providing a benefit to municipalities, industries and agriculture. I urge your departments to place a new focus on building and advancing water storage projects and to eliminate the delays that are hampering so many worthwhile projects in Colorado and around the nation.

Colorado is currently experiencing one of the worst droughts on record. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Drought Monitor, most of the state is experiencing a D2 severe status or higher. The drought has become so extreme that municipalities have already determined that they will not lease water to farmers which has been common in years past. Simply put, there is not enough water to meet the needs of both agriculture and municipal usage. With population expansion and use demands, this problem will only get worse.

This year, Colorado has received dismal levels of precipitation. Rivers and reservoirs are well-below average. According to the Natural Resources Conversation Service SNOTEL report, the upper Colorado River Basin in particular is 50 percent below average. While water efficiency and conservation is important and part of the solution, as highlighted in the Colorado River Basin Study, these alone cannot resolve this dire situation. New storage would allow users to store water in wet years to compensate for years of drought.

We must start building new water storage infrastructure, and the federal government must facilitate – not hinder – this construction. We cannot afford the policy consequence of buy up and dry of agricultural land as cities and industries quench their thirst. As such, I will be introducing legislation in the 113th Congress to advance new surface storage projects. I welcome the opportunity to work with your departments and to receiving input from you in order to achieve this goal. Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cory Gardner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cory Gardner
Member of Congress