



April 19, 2013

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Attention: Ms. Pam Adams, LC-4017
Boulder City, NV 89006-1470

Dear Ms. Adams and colleagues:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Colorado River Basin (CRB) Water Supply & Demand Study. The study provides much valuable information that will help future efforts to create a sustainable future for this invaluable resource and the 40 million Americans who depend on it.

Those of us who study the Colorado River know that Reclamation's study is the best word yet on the future of the river and, especially, how climate change may affect it, but that it is far from the final word. With this in mind, we urge Reclamation, in future work to assess climate change impacts on the Colorado River and also on other river systems, to not lump together into a single climate-change future all projections from all computer runs from global climate models, as the 2012 CRB study does in almost every instance. Many different climate-change-driven futures are possible, depending on both future levels of heat-trapping pollution and the sensitivity of the climate to those pollution levels. It is important that decision makers and the general public alike understand the differences among those possible futures, principally so we can understand the extent to which there is value in reducing emissions to minimize climate change and its impacts. Therefore, we urge that Reclamation in its studies that assess climate change to separately analyze and present the climate-change projections based on the emissions scenarios that are used. This is the practice followed in most climate change assessments. An example is the 2013 National Climate Assessment to be released later this year by the U.S. government, which consistently presents the different climate changes and impacts that would result from relatively higher levels of emissions and from relatively lower levels.

We acknowledge that the Bureau did include in the report table B-1, the one instance where projections are clearly separated by the three different emissions scenarios used in the study. This table shows that higher levels of emissions are projected to lead to lower levels of river flow at Lees Ferry. This is important information, and we are glad that it was included. Similar analysis and presentation would also have been very useful for the projections of climate change effects on water demand. There, the differences in impacts doubtless would have been much greater among the scenarios, as those impacts are driven largely by temperatures, which, closely relate (more than precipitation does) to emissions levels..

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Saunders".

Stephen Saunders
President