

[View this email in your browser](#)



Ag Matters on the Colorado River

While atmospheric rivers, record snowpack in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and California flooding are grabbing much of the recent headlines, agriculture in the Colorado River Basin continues to be a newsworthy topic.



CBC News last week published "[An American water crisis](#)", which reports on the "desperate days" for the Colorado River. "The pulsing lifeblood of the U.S. southwest is increasingly parched. To avert catastrophe, the U.S. government will, within weeks, propose historic cuts in water access. It's a frantic move to protect a river that provides so much:

drinking water for tens of millions of people, electricity and food. Lots of food."

Joanna Allhands, an editor with the *Arizona Republic* – the state's largest newspaper - acknowledges in this [opinion piece](#) that Arizona agriculture uses a lot of water. But using less isn't as simple as asking farmers - by goodwill or force - to stop growing thirsty crops. Arizona farmers must use less water. Few of us truly understand what that takes. Check out [her online column in AZCentral](#).

Henry Martinez, the General Manager of Imperial Irrigation District (pictured right), took issue with a recent *Las Vegas Review-Journal* editorial promoting federal intervention to solve the Colorado River crisis. The editorial "contains many inaccuracies" he wrote in his [March 4 response](#) to the editorial. "The editorial also suggests that using water in California to grow food or certain crops — the very reason for the creation of the federal Bureau of Reclamation — is not a beneficial use of that water but fails to acknowledge these same crops are grown throughout the rest of the basin, including Nevada."



"This anti-agriculture rhetoric is all-too common these days but made worse when incorrect," Mr. Martinez writes in his [guest response](#).

Across the state line in Arizona, the Yuma County Agriculture Water Coalition and Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association are providing resources to demonstrate the importance of Yuma's water allocations. [CLICK HERE](#) for more news on this effort and links to a webpage and video that further illustrate what could happen if the Yuma area does not get its water allocations from the Colorado River.

Decisions made by federal administrators regarding allocation of Colorado River water resources during this drought must rely on proven technologies, not experiments. Operations of Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River is one such example. Currently, the Bureau of Reclamation is evaluating experimental stored water releases at the expense of hydropower generation, in an attempt to stop the potential establishment of smallmouth bass populations below Glen Canyon Dam. ("[How a 'cold shock' of water from Lake Powell could thwart invasive Grand Canyon bass](#)", *Arizona Republic*, 3/10/23).

Unfortunately, not only is the scientific underpinning of these additional releases unproven, but Reclamation's analysis to date has also not evaluated any potential non-flow measures to address this concern. Read more about this in the Family Farm Alliance's [written testimony](#) prepared in advance of Executive Director Dan Keppen's appearance before the House Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee on March 8.

A top priority for the Family Farm Alliance in 2023 continues to be advocating that agricultural water users dependent upon the Colorado River are included as partners as Reclamation develops future long-term operating provisions on the River.

We will continue to keep you informed on this and other developments impacting Western irrigated agriculture.

If you're not a member, join us!

