

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

David Palumbo
Acting Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Commissioner Palumbo:

The undersigned California water and power agencies want to express their recognition, appreciation, and support for the goals enumerated in the President's Executive Memorandums of maximizing California water supply and promoting a more efficient Federal government.

We are customers of the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation's) Central Valley Project (CVP), a complex, multi-purpose network of more than 20 dams and reservoirs, hydroelectric powerplants, and canals and other facilities that extend more than 400 miles through central California. The Central Valley Project was designed to serve the water supply needs of approximately 2.3 million people and more than 3 million acres of the nation's most productive farmland in California, providing significant food and fiber that is critical to our national food security, as well as supporting California's technology economy. In addition to these critical functions, the Central Valley Project also generates 5.6 billion kilowatt-hours of clean and reliable hydropower annually, enough to meet the needs of about 2 million people. As water and power agencies with a responsibility to the public, we share the President's goals of improving the reliable, efficient, and affordable delivery of water and energy and ensuring the food security of the United States.

We are writing to offer to our assistance and desire for collaboration with you and Reclamation leadership – to share our expertise of the California water system and regulations to assist the Administration in advancing our mutual goal of delivering the greatest amount of water, at the lowest cost, for California's people and the nation's food supply. We agree that our precious taxpayer dollars must be utilized and managed in an efficient, transparent and responsible manner, and we welcome this unprecedented opportunity to revamp the federal water delivery system with the aim of reducing both waste and conflict.

It is important to note that elimination of Reclamation staff will not further the goal of achieving significant cost savings to the American people. Unlike many other federal agencies, Reclamation is a service organization, predominantly funded not by the taxpayers, but instead by its water and power customers. Pursuant to federal statutes, including the Reclamation Reform Act signed into

law by President Reagan in 1986, the water and power contractors pay into the Treasury to fund the benefits they receive. As such, the elimination of Reclamation's staff would merely compromise its ability to fulfill its mission of delivering water and power without significantly promoting the goal of increasing the federal coffers.

The current water delivery system certainly has room for improvement. We have experienced firsthand some of the inefficiencies and duplications, and we would be honored to provide our input into areas ripe for improvement. For example, we would be pleased to offer suggestions about how federal regulations could be modified to improve Reclamation's ability to comply with federal statutes and to facilitate the reliable delivery of safe, clean water and hydropower to the people.

We would like to collaborate with your team to develop a strategic and thoughtful approach to implement actions in accordance with the President's policies while protecting, maintaining, and efficiently and effectively operating the vital infrastructure that serves the needs of our great nation. To achieve the President's goal of maximizing water supplies, it is paramount that we maintain the critical water and power service provided by Reclamation. This cannot be achieved without the retention and preservation of the qualified, dedicated, experienced Reclamation staff upon which we rely to operate and maintain this vital infrastructure.

In our experience, the vast majority of staff throughout Reclamation's California-Great Basin region is comprised of dedicated, talented federal employees, possessing specialized skills, knowledge, and the relevant and specific experience necessary to safely and efficiently manage, operate and maintain one of the largest, most complex water projects in the world. Moreover, the proper, safe, and efficient operation of the CVP is critical to health of welfare of those who live, work, and farm in the Central Valley and Silicon Valley, both from a flood control and economic perspective. It is no secret that our water supply infrastructure is badly outdated and in need of upgrading.

Reclamation's employees in this region have critical knowledge of the many quirks of our aged infrastructure. This knowledge is absolutely *essential* to assuring the continued safe and reliable delivery of water throughout the state – thereby allowing Reclamation to fulfill its fundamental mission. The highly specialized skill sets held by these experienced Reclamation employees cannot be easily replaced.

Finally, a reduction in force that eliminates Reclamation employees with the specialized knowledge needed to manage, operate, and maintain our aging infrastructure could negatively impact our water delivery system and threaten public health and safety. We encourage you to factor in these considerations above as you proceed to undertake your work related to Reclamation in a thoughtful and strategic manner. Simply put, it is critical that Reclamation retains experienced staff to continue fulfilling its mission (and its contractual obligations) of delivering reliable water and power supplies to its paying contractors.

To further our shared goals of improving government efficiency while preserving the delivery of these essential services, we stand prepared to coordinate, collaborate and work with you to

promote both government efficiency as well as responsible management of the CVP to meet its Congressionally authorized purposes in the most efficient manner.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Should you wish to discuss these matters in greater detail, we would welcome the opportunity to engage in such a dialogue.

Sincerely,

Jeff Sutton
General Manager
Glenn Colusa Irrigation District

William Vanderwaal, PE
General Manager
Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority

Lewis Bair
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Mike Gardner
General Manager
Columbia Canal Company