



February 24, 2025

Brett Ewart, Chair  
Michael Saunders, Vice Chair

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

### ***Members***

California American Water  
Carmichael Water District  
Citrus Heights Water District  
Del Paso Manor Water District  
El Dorado Irrigation District  
Elk Grove Water District  
Fair Oaks Water District  
Folsom, City of  
Georgetown Divide Public Utility District  
Golden State Water Company  
Lincoln, City of  
Nevada Irrigation District  
Orange Vale Water Company  
Placer County Water Agency  
Rancho Murieta Community Services District  
Roseville, City of  
Sacramento, City of  
Sacramento County Water Agency  
Sacramento Suburban Water District  
San Juan Water District  
West Sacramento, City of  
Yuba City, City of

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

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Commissioner Palumbo:

On behalf of the Regional Water Authority (RWA), I write to express my concern that large reductions in force of Reclamation staff would impair the agency's ability to meet its critical mission to serve, operate, and maintain the important public works that make up the Central Valley Project (CVP).

Many of our water purveyor members are contractors of and collaborators with Reclamation's CVP, a complex, multi-purpose network of more than 20 dams and reservoirs, hydroelectric powerplants, canals and other facilities that extend more than 400 miles through central California. The mission of Reclamation is *to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public*. Reclamation is predominantly funded not by taxpayers, but by its water and power customers.

The risks to public safety and national security impacts to our food supply from a reduction of force are consequential. Specifically, the flood control element of public safety and the disruption to the nation's food supply should be considered. One of the key public safety missions of the CVP is to provide flood control. Folsom Reservoir, a part of the CVP was initially authorized and still remains as a flood control facility protecting the greater Sacramento area. This year alone, the CVP has protected our region from the potential of dangerous flooding.

### ***Associates***

County of Placer  
El Dorado County Water Agency  
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency  
Sacramento Municipal Utility District  
Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District  
Yuba Water Agency

With respect to national security interests, the CVP delivers and manages water for the Central Valley which is America's Breadbasket. Additionally, the operation of the CVP takes into account the fisheries that the West Coast commercial fishing fleet rely upon. The Central Valley in California produces over 250 different crops, contributing roughly 25% of the nation's food supply, with a value estimated at around \$17 billion annually. The Central Valley supplies approximately one quarter of the nation's fruits, nuts, and table foods, despite using less than 1% of U.S. farmland. Important to the Nation's food supply is California's commercial fishing fleet, which has historically landed 374 million pounds of fish annually. Key to maintaining public safety and

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national security interests associated with this important economic influx for the country is the staff at Reclamation's California-Great Basin region.

In our experience, the staff throughout Reclamation's California-Great Basin region are 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 operations of the CVP are critical to the Central Valley. 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 critical needs of our aged infrastructure. This knowledge is absolutely essential to assuring the continued safe delivery of water – and allowing Reclamation to fulfill its fundamental mission to the people. The highly specialized skill sets held by these experienced Reclamation employees cannot be easily replaced.

Nor would elimination of these staff achieve significant cost savings for the American people. 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. Eliminating Reclamation's staff thus would compromise its ability to fulfill its mission of delivering water and power to us without significantly increasing the federal coffers.

A reduction in force that eliminates Reclamation employees with the specialized knowledge needed to move water through our aging infrastructure could cripple our water delivery system and create a significant safety risk. It is my assessment that the organization is already extremely lean on staffing, and further workforce cuts would jeopardize its mission and place the American people, who live in or near key federal water facilities such as dams, in danger. I 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 sufficient experienced staff to continue fulfilling its mission - and its contractual obligations - of delivering reliable water and power supplies to its paying contractors.

In closing, we appreciate the Administration's goals of reducing inflation and building the economy. The knowledgeable and highly essential staff at Reclamation will be needed to deliver on those goals. We look forward to working with you and we appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jim Peifer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and last name "Peifer" clearly distinguishable.

Jim Peifer  
Executive Director