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President Obama's Drought Resilience Update Bodes Well for Business, Agriculture, Municipalities in the CO River Basin

Denver, Colorado -- The Obama Administration today released its [*Report to the Council on Climate Preparedness and Resilience*](#) detailing the progress made since President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum in March calling on federal agencies to ramp up the nation's capabilities to accomplish long-term drought resilience.

"We thank Secretary Sally Jewell and Secretary Tom Vilsack for staying focused on addressing the debilitating effects of the West's persistent drought and protecting the Colorado River," said **Molly Muggleston, Co-Director of Protect the Flows**, the "business voice" of the Colorado River. "Each new step toward Colorado River sustainability is a boost for businesses, farmers and ranchers, and cities and towns that are experiencing severe water shortages in many regions of the Colorado River basin."

Among other steps in the Memorandum, President Obama had ordered agencies to collaborate on drought-related activities in key watersheds, with an aim to maximize for taxpayers the combined benefits of investments made by federal water conservation programs. This August progress report to the Council demonstrates a marked increase in state-federal and inter-agency collaboration to share water data and better meet watershed planning and drought resilience goals.

In particular, Protect the Flows has voiced support for increased cooperation between the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the U.S. Interior Department's WaterSMART grants program, as the Bureau of Reclamation works with water providers to improve water delivery and USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service works with producers to maximize use of the delivered water.

Toward that goal, in June, USDA Secretary Vilsack and Reclamation Commissioner Estevan Lopez announced more than \$47 million in federal investments to help water districts and producers through an expansion of the EQIP-WaterSMART partnership.

"I continue to believe that this partnership between USDA-DOI in the Colorado River basin will bring about water savings, strengthen our economy and protect our land and water resources," said **Molly Muggleston, Co-Director of Protect the Flows**. "We need to encourage and invest in more projects that not only benefit agriculture or municipal water supply interests, but also keep water in our rivers for fish, wildlife and recreation, and keep our water supplies more resilient. That's a win-win."

Finally, to fulfill the Presidential Priority to explore innovative financing options for drought resilience, the progress report indicates that EPA, Interior Department and USDA have been working together to encourage private sector investment in water infrastructure and efficiency projects. The three agencies will support The [Natural Resource Investment Center's](#) (NRIC) work with the Bureau of Reclamation to repurpose \$3 million from the WaterSMART grant program to encourage irrigation districts and municipalities to design and implement water markets and identify WaterSMART grant recipients that could attract private capital through slight adjustments to their initial proposals.

“President Obama’s effort to bring private investment and the innovative thinking of business into natural resource management is a winning solution to address drought -- and protect our rivers, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities in the process,” said **Molly Mugglestone, Co-Director of Protect the Flows.**

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[Protect the Flows](#) is a network of over 1100 businesses who depend on and support a healthy and thriving Colorado River system for the economic vitality it provides. Healthy rivers support economies and communities within the Colorado River Basin and beyond. Members of PTF range from wineries and bed & breakfasts to banks and Fortune 500 companies, all of whom support innovative and common-sense solutions to the water challenges facing the Southwest.