



January 13, 2021

Dear [Tribal Leader]:

Tribes have historically been excluded from Colorado River policy discussions. Moreover, there is currently no single forum for leaders of all basin tribes to advance shared interests in the governance and use of the Colorado River.

We are writing to invite you to join us in launching the Tribal Leaders Forum (TLF) for the Colorado River. The primary objective of TLF is to establish a tribes-led process for the 29-plus sovereign tribes in the Colorado River Basin to influence policy and governance in the basin, beginning with the renegotiation of the 2007 Interim Guidelines for the Colorado River. We share a common interest in ensuring recognition of and respect for tribal water rights and the removal of barriers that have hindered equal treatment of tribal rights in the past.

We realize that each tribe will have its own particular interests and concerns regarding the operation and management of the Colorado River. However, we believe that tribes' issues are much more likely to be acknowledged and accommodated when multiple tribes speak with a unified voice and advocate for general principles or a particular position. Participation in the TLF will allow you to be proactive rather than having to rely on other entities to advocate for your interests. The TLF will be driven by and for tribal leaders, and it is intended to supplement other opportunities you may have to participate in developing agreements that will replace the 2007 Interim Guidelines.

A formal process to renegotiate the 2007 Interim Guidelines is likely to commence in 2021, and now is the time to organize and develop positions that can be advanced in discussions with the other sovereigns in the basin – the federal government and the seven basin states – as well as various stakeholders. We would like to convene the initial meeting of the TLF in late February or early March 2021 to learn about the water needs and interests of all the tribes in the basin, begin to identify common issues and principles shared among multiple tribes, and to create a roadmap for the immediate future. We also plan to invite a high-level

person affiliated with the incoming Biden Administration to share information on the new Administration's agenda and priorities for the Colorado River Basin and the role of tribes in negotiating a new management framework for the river.

Given the coronavirus pandemic, this initial meeting will be virtual. The Water & Tribes Initiative (WTI) will facilitate the TLF and provide other backbone support. The co-facilitators for WTI – Daryl Vigil and Matt McKinney -- will reach-out to you via a telephone call in the coming days to clarify your schedule and expectations for the TLF. We are in the process of reaching-out to the Ten Tribes Partnership and the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona to ensure coordination with these tribal leader groups that also have an important role in developing the management framework that will replace the 2007 Interim Guidelines.

We sincerely hope that you will consider becoming a founding member of the TLF, and/or designate one of your council members to participate in the Forum.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Melvin Baker, Chairman, Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Tamra Borchardt-Slayton, Chairwoman, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

Damon R. Clarke, Chairman, Hualapai Tribe

Sherry Cordova, Chairwoman, Cocopah Indian Tribe

Luke Duncan, Chairman, Ute Indian Tribe

Manuel Heart, Chairman, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

Jordan D. Joaquin, President, Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe

Stephen Roe Lewis, Governor, Gila River Indian Community

Robert Miguel, Chairman, Ak-Chin Indian Community

Austin Nunez, Chairman, San Xavier District, Tohono O'odham Nation

Timothy L. Nuvangyaoma, Chairman, Hopi Tribe

Laura Parry, Chairwoman, Moapa Band of Paiutes

Sierra Pencille, Chairwoman, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe

Edward Velarde, President, Jicarilla Apache Nation