

**JOINT RESOLUTION REQUESTING ANALYSIS OF
COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

2015 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Joel K. Briscoe

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This joint resolution of the Legislature urges the National Research Council to conduct a scientific and economic review of Colorado River management needs and options that provide for the sustainable management of the Colorado River.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ urges the National Research Council to undertake a scientific and economic review of Colorado River management needs and options that provide for the sustainable management of this critical piece of the Southwest's social and economic infrastructure and superlative component of the world's natural heritage; and

- ▶ urges that the evaluation include and address certain issues enumerated in the resolution.

Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

WHEREAS, the Colorado River water supply is critical to people of the state of Utah;

WHEREAS, the Colorado River water supply is shared with six other states, 29 Indian tribes, and the Mexican states of Baja, California, and Sonora, Mexico;



28 WHEREAS, the Colorado water supply is crucial to the economic activity of these
29 states and tribes;

30 WHEREAS, approximately 40 million people depend upon the Colorado River water
31 supply;

32 WHEREAS, 22% of the water used in Utah agricultural production and 34% of the
33 municipal and industrial water use in Utah is sourced from the Colorado River;

34 WHEREAS, a recent study done by Arizona State University estimates that the
35 Colorado River has an annual impact of \$1.4 trillion to the Colorado Basin states economies;

36 WHEREAS, the annual contribution of the Colorado River to the gross state product of
37 the Colorado Basin states is equivalent to 1/12 of the entire United States economy in 2012;

38 WHEREAS, the annual economic impact of the Colorado River to Utah’s economy is
39 \$69.8 billion and almost 970,000 jobs;

40 WHEREAS, the United States Bureau of Reclamation describes the Colorado River as
41 the “lifeblood” of 22 federally recognized tribes, seven national wildlife refuges, four national
42 reclamation areas, and 11 national parks;

43 WHEREAS, the Colorado River watershed is a national and international treasure;

44 WHEREAS, stewardship of this natural resource treasure is entrusted to the water
45 users, but it benefits the nation and the world;

46 WHEREAS, the Colorado River Basin has experienced severe and persistent drought
47 conditions for much of the past 15 years;

48 WHEREAS, the drought conditions have caused historically low reservoir levels, which
49 have created enormous challenges for state and federal water managers;

50 WHEREAS, accessible groundwater is being consumed faster by Colorado River water
51 users than it is being replenished;

52 WHEREAS, Colorado River water use must be managed to meet the long term water
53 needs of the state and region;

54 WHEREAS, extensive, untapped techniques and technologies are available to
55 dramatically increase water use efficiency across the spectrum of Colorado River water users;

56 WHEREAS, recent scientific findings reveal historic and prehistoric flood patterns in
57 the Colorado watershed of magnitudes and frequencies far greater than what the current
58 Colorado River water management infrastructure was designed for or has experienced;

59 WHEREAS, the Colorado River watershed's river corridor feeds the greatest number of
60 national parks and monuments in the United States, but diminished river flows jeopardize
61 habitats and complicate the management of park resources consistent with park values;

62 WHEREAS, the Colorado River Delta lacks sufficient flows to maintain and ensure
63 critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and other species that inhabit and rely upon this unique
64 wetland environment;

65 WHEREAS, Colorado River Basin states could benefit from the establishment of an
66 independent body to examine the complex set of interrelated issues affecting the health of the
67 Colorado River system, its water delivery infrastructure, and how to sustain delivery of its
68 portfolio of ecological services without placing the river, its water users, or the economies it
69 supports in jeopardy;

70 WHEREAS, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences
71 provides expert advice on some of the most pressing challenges facing the nation and the
72 world;

73 WHEREAS, part of the National Research Council's mission is to improve government
74 decision making and public policy, increase public understanding, and promote the acquisition
75 and dissemination of knowledge in matters involving science, engineering, technology, and
76 health;

77 WHEREAS, the National Research Council has previously studied the Colorado River;
78 and

79 WHEREAS, a new analysis would supplement and enhance the Colorado River Basin
80 study recently completed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation:

81 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah
82 urges the National Research Council to undertake a scientific and economic review of
83 Colorado River management needs and options that provide for the sustainable management of
84 this critical piece of the Southwest's social and economic infrastructure and superlative
85 component of the world's natural heritage.

86 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah urges that, in its
87 evaluation, the National Research Council include and address:

88 • the likelihood that future Colorado River flows will be sufficient to meet
89 Colorado River Compact allocations;

- 90 • the ability of groundwater stocks to sustain projected demand;
- 91 • techniques and technologies available to increase water use efficiency
- 92 across the spectrum of Colorado River Basin water users;
- 93 • flood risks and flood management strategies to minimize exposure and
- 94 damage;
- 95 • viability of underground aquifers to substitute for above ground water
- 96 storage;
- 97 • strategies to remove hazards to the Colorado River's threatened and
- 98 endangered species, as well as to reestablish viable populations of those
- 99 species that are extirpated or extinct;
- 100 • flow requirements for the permanent restoration of sufficient delta
- 101 wetland habitat and to allow for the cleanup of the Salton Sea; and
- 102 • scenarios for meeting the region's future water needs that provide
- 103 resilience in times of shortages and effective management in times of
- 104 flood and that maximize the potential for environmental preservation
- 105 and restoration.

106 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the National
107 Resource Council, the United States Bureau of Reclamation, the leader of each legislative
108 house in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Wyoming, the Colorado
109 River Water Users Association, the Ten Tribes Partnership, the Colorado River Basin Tribes
110 Partnership, and the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

Legislative Review Note
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Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel