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## **Water agreement signals “new levels of coordination,” say conservation groups**

*U.S. Bureau of Reclamation joins Arizona to boost levels in Lake Mead and secure water supplies for 6+ million Arizona residents*

**(Phoenix, AZ—July 14, 2017)** Conservation groups today praised a collaborative agreement that will protect Lake Mead and shore up Colorado River water supplies during an era of projected shortages.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), State Of Arizona, City of Phoenix and Walton Family Foundation (WFF) agreed to conserve a major portion of the GRIC’s Central Arizona Project (CAP) water entitlement to reduce the risk of Lake Mead falling to critically low reservoir levels. Under the agreement, the parties will share the cost of compensating GRIC to voluntarily leave 40,000 acre-feet of their Colorado River water supplies in Lake Mead during 2017. While the City of Phoenix and other parties approved the agreement in June, GRIC made the deal official with their announcement today.

“Solutions to Arizona’s water issues will take cooperation, collaboration and creativity,” said Bart Miller, Healthy Rivers Program Director for Western Resource Advocates. “This agreement is a great example of that, signaling new levels of coordination between uncommon partners to protect Lake Mead.”

“Collaborations such as this are essential to maintaining secure water supplies for both human and wildlife habitat needs, and will be increasingly important to the health of Colorado River Basin communities and ecosystems,” added Sonia Perillo, vice president and executive director of Audubon Arizona.

GRIC has been involved in a number of water conservation agreements in 2017 including an innovative partnership with the State of Arizona, City of Phoenix and WFF announced in March. Importantly, the addition of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to the partnership adds needed funding for water conservation measures and signals new levels of collaboration between federal, state, local, tribal and philanthropic entities.

“At a time when Arizona and its Colorado River neighbors are working hard to find solutions to drought and dropping reservoir levels at Lake Mead, it is highly valuable to have the support of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for this important water conservation agreement,” said Jeff Odefey, Director of the Clean Water Supply Program for American Rivers.

The agreement also establishes the foundation for the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) to complete and successfully implement an Arizona “DCP Plus” Plan, as part of Lower Basin drought contingency planning, to voluntarily acquire quantities of water from water users to be retained in Lake Mead.

“The agreement is another major success in the efforts led by ADWR to conserve water in ways that help to secure Arizona’s Colorado River water supplies for the state’s 6 million+ residents,” said Kevin Moran, Senior Director for the Environmental Defense Fund’s Water Program. “This shows the willingness of diverse water stakeholders to come together in order to help solve Arizona’s pressing water issues, starting with the health of the Colorado River system.”