

Statement of
ESTEVAN R. LOPEZ, DIRECTOR,
NEW MEXICO INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION
to the
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG
ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES
in support of
FY 2014 Appropriations for ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM and
COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

March 20, 2013

SUMMARY

This Statement is submitted in support of appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Program). The Program is funded through EQIP, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Basinwide Program, and cost-sharing provided by the Basin States. I request that at least \$17.3 million in EQIP funds be designated for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program in FY 2014. I request that adequate funds be appropriated for technical assistance and education activities directed to Program participants.

STATEMENT

Congress authorized the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program in the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974. Congress amended the Act in 1984 to give new

responsibilities to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While retaining the Department of the Interior as the lead coordinator for the Program, the amended Act recognized the importance of USDA efforts in meeting the objectives of the Program. Many of the most cost-effective salinity control projects to date have occurred since implementation of the USDA's authorization for the Program.

With the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIRA), Congress directed that the Program be implemented as a component of EQIP. However, until 2004, the Program was not funded at an adequate level to protect the Basin State-adopted and Environmental Protection Agency approved water quality standards for salinity in the Colorado River. Appropriations for EQIP prior to 2004 were insufficient to adequately control salinity impacts from water delivered to the downstream states and Mexico.

EQIP subsumed the salinity control program without giving adequate recognition to the responsibilities of the USDA to implement salinity control measures per Section 202 (c) of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act. The EQIP evaluation and project ranking criteria targeted small watershed improvements and did not recognize that water users hundreds of miles downstream are significant beneficiaries of the salinity control program. Proposals for EQIP funding were ranked in the states of Utah, Wyoming and Colorado under the direction of the respective State Conservationists without consideration of those downstream, particularly out-of-state, benefits.

Following recommendations of the Basin States to address the funding problem, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) designated the Colorado River Basin an "area of special interest" and earmarked funds for the Program. The NRCS concluded that the salinity control program is different from the small watershed approach of EQIP. The watershed for the Program stretches more than 1400 miles from the headwaters of the river through the salt-laden soils of the entire basin to the river's termination at the Gulf of California in Mexico. NRCS is to be commended for its efforts to comply with the USDA's responsibilities under the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, as amended.

With the enactment of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act in 2002, an opportunity to adequately fund the salinity control program now exists. The NRCS State Conservationists for Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado now prepare a three-year funding plan for the salinity efforts under EQIP. I support this plan, including the request for \$17.3 million in FY 2014. State and local cost-sharing will be triggered by and indexed to the federal appropriation.

USDA salinity control projects have proven to be a cost-effective component of the salinity control program. The Basin states have cost-sharing dollars available to participate in on-farm salinity control efforts. The agricultural producers in the Upper Basin are willing to cost-share their portion and are awaiting funding for their applications to be considered.

Bureau of Reclamation studies show that quantified damages from Colorado River salinity to United States water users are about \$376,000,000 per year, with these damages rising to \$577,000,000 per year by 2030 if the Program was discontinued. Continued funding of USDA

salinity control projects is important to protect the quality of Colorado River Basin water delivered to the Lower Basin States and Mexico. Also, irrigated agriculture in the Upper Basin realizes significant local benefits of improved irrigation practices.

I urge the Congress to designate at least \$17.3 million in EQIP funds for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program in FY 2014.

Estevan R. López, P.E.

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Statement of
ESTEVAN R. LOPEZ, DIRECTOR
NEW MEXICO INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION

to the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

in support of

FY 2014 Appropriations for BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT activities
to benefit COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL,
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

APRIL 25, 2013

SUMMARY

This Statement is submitted in support of Fiscal Year 2014 appropriations for Colorado River Basin salinity control activities of the Bureau of Land Management. I urge that at least \$5,200,000 be appropriated for the Bureau of Land Management within the Soil, Water, and Air Program for general water quality improvement efforts in the Colorado River Basin, and an additional \$1,500,000 be appropriated specifically for salinity control related projects and studies.

STATEMENT

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) is comprised of representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin States appointed by the respective governors of the states. The Forum has examined the features needed to control the salinity of the Colorado River. These include activities by the states, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Salinity Control Program has been adopted by the seven Colorado River Basin States and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency as a part of each state's water quality standards.

About 75 percent of the land in the Colorado River Basin is owned, administered or held in trust by the federal government. The BLM is the largest land manager in the Colorado River Basin, and manages public lands that are heavily laden with naturally occurring salt. When salt-laden soils erode, the salts dissolve and enter the river system, affecting the quality of water used from the Colorado River by the Lower Basin States and Mexico.

I support past federal legislation that declared that the federal government has a

major and important responsibility with respect to controlling salt discharge from public lands. Congress has charged the federal agencies to proceed with programs to control the salinity of the Colorado River Basin with a strong mandate to seek out the most cost-effective solutions. The BLM's rangeland improvement programs are some of the most cost-effective salinity control measures available. In addition, these programs are environmentally acceptable and control erosion, increase grazing opportunities, produce dependable stream run-off and enhance wildlife habitat.

The water quality standards adopted by the Colorado River Basin States contain a plan of implementation that includes BLM participation to implement cost effective measures of salinity control. BLM participation in the salinity control program is critical and essential to actively pursue the identification, implementation and quantification of cost effective salinity control measures on public lands.

Bureau of Reclamation studies show that quantified damages from Colorado River salinity to United States water users are about \$376 million per year. Modeling by Reclamation indicates that these quantified damages would increase to \$577 million per year by 2030 if the Salinity Control Program was not continued. Unquantified damages already increase the total damages significantly.

Control of salinity is necessary for the Basin States, including New Mexico, to continue to develop their compact-apportioned waters of the Colorado River. The Basin States are proceeding with an independent program to control salt discharges to the Colorado River, in addition to cost sharing with Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Agriculture salinity control programs. It is vitally important that the BLM pursue salinity control projects within its jurisdiction to maintain the cost effectiveness of the program and the timely implementation of salinity control projects that will help avoid unnecessary damages in the United States and Mexico.

At the urging of the Basin States, the BLM has created a full time position to coordinate its activities among the BLM state offices and other federal agencies involved in implementation of the salinity control program. The BLM's Budget Justification documents have stated that BLM continues to implement on-the-ground projects, evaluate progress in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture, and report salt retention measures to implement and maintain salinity control measures of the federal salinity control program in the Colorado River Basin. The BLM is to be commended for its commitment to cooperate and coordinate with the Basin States and other federal agencies. The Basin States and I are pleased with the BLM administration's responsiveness in addressing the need for renewed emphasis on its efforts to control salinity sources and to comply with BLM responsibilities pursuant to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, as amended.

To continue these efforts, I request the appropriation of at least \$5.2 million in FY 2014 for general water quality improvement efforts in the Colorado River Basin by the BLM within the Soil, Water, and Air Program, and that an additional \$1.5 million be

appropriated specifically for salinity control related projects and studies. I appreciate consideration of these requests. I fully support the statement of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum submitted by Don Barnett, the Forum's Executive Director, in request of appropriations for BLM for Colorado River salinity control activities.

Estevan R. López, P.E.
Director, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

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Statement of
ESTEVAN R. LOPEZ, DIRECTOR,
NEW MEXICO INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION

to the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG
ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

in support of

FY 2014 Appropriations for ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM
and COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

April 26, 2013

SUMMARY

This Statement is submitted in support of appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Program). The Program is funded through EQIP, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Basinwide Program, and cost-sharing provided by the Basin States. I request that at least \$17.3 million in EQIP funds be designated for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program in FY 2014. I request that adequate funds be appropriated for technical assistance and education activities directed to Program participants.

STATEMENT

Congress authorized the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program in the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974. Congress amended the Act in 1984 to give new responsibilities to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While retaining the Department of the Interior as the lead coordinator for the Program, the amended Act recognized the importance of USDA efforts in meeting the objectives of the Program. Many of the most cost-effective salinity control projects to date have occurred since implementation of the USDA's authorization for the Program.

With the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIRA), Congress directed that the Program be implemented as a component of EQIP. However, until 2004, the Program was not funded at an adequate level to protect the Basin State-adopted and Environmental Protection Agency approved water quality standards for salinity in the Colorado River. Appropriations for EQIP prior to 2004 were insufficient to

adequately control salinity impacts from water delivered to the downstream states and Mexico.

EQIP subsumed the salinity control program without giving adequate recognition to the responsibilities of the USDA to implement salinity control measures per Section 202 (c) of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act. The EQIP evaluation and project ranking criteria targeted small watershed improvements and did not recognize that water users hundreds of miles downstream are significant beneficiaries of the salinity control program. Proposals for EQIP funding were ranked in the states of Utah, Wyoming and Colorado under the direction of the respective State Conservationists without consideration of those downstream, particularly out-of-state, benefits.

Following recommendations of the Basin States to address the funding problem, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) designated the Colorado River Basin an "area of special interest" and earmarked funds for the Program. The NRCS concluded that the salinity control program is different from the small watershed approach of EQIP. The watershed for the Program stretches more than 1400 miles from the headwaters of the river through the salt-laden soils of the entire basin to the river's termination at the Gulf of California in Mexico. NRCS is to be commended for its efforts to comply with the USDA's responsibilities under the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, as amended.

With the enactment of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act in 2002, an opportunity to adequately fund the salinity control program now exists. The NRCS State Conservationists for Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado now prepare a three-year funding plan for the salinity efforts under EQIP. I support this plan, including the request for \$17.3 million in FY 2014. State and local cost-sharing will be triggered by and indexed to the federal appropriation.

USDA salinity control projects have proven to be a cost-effective component of the salinity control program. The Basin states have cost-sharing dollars available to participate in on-farm salinity control efforts. The agricultural producers in the Upper Basin are willing to cost-share their portion and are awaiting funding for their applications to be considered.

Bureau of Reclamation studies show that quantified damages from Colorado River salinity to United States water users are about \$376,000,000 per year, with these damages rising to \$577,000,000 per year by 2030 if the Program was discontinued. Continued funding of USDA salinity control projects is important to protect the quality of Colorado River Basin water delivered to the Lower Basin States and Mexico. Also, irrigated agriculture in the Upper Basin realizes significant local benefits of improved irrigation practices.

I urge the Congress to designate at least \$17.3 million in EQIP funds for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program in FY 2014.

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Statement of
ESTEVAN R. LOPEZ, DIRECTOR
NEW MEXICO INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION

to the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT

in support of

FY 2014 Appropriation for
COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM, TITLE II,
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

May 3, 2013

SUMMARY

This Statement is submitted in support of Fiscal Year 2014 appropriations for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Program) of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Reclamation serves as the lead federal agency in implementing the Program. **Reclamation** primarily institutes salinity control through its **Basinwide Program**. A total of **\$15,400,000** is requested for Fiscal Year 2014 to implement the authorized salinity control program of the Bureau of Reclamation. Recent years have followed a trend of inadequate funding for the needs of the program. An appropriation of \$15,400,000 for Reclamation's salinity control program is necessary to restore the program to the level needed to protect water quality standards for salinity and to prevent unnecessary levels of economic damage from increased salinity in water delivered to the Lower Basin States of the Colorado River.

STATEMENT

The water quality standards for salinity of the Colorado River must be protected while the Basin States continue to develop their compact apportioned waters of the river. The salinity standards for the Colorado River have been adopted by the seven Basin States and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. While currently the standards have not been exceeded, salinity control projects must be brought on-line in a timely manner to counter the effects of future development that could result in unnecessary damages from higher levels of salinity in the water delivered to the Lower Basin States of the Colorado River.

The seven Colorado River Basin States, in response to the Clean Water Act of 1972, formed the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum), a body comprised of gubernatorial representatives from the seven states. The Forum was

created to provide for interstate cooperation in response to the Clean Water Act and to provide the states with information necessary to comply with Sections 303(a) and (b) of the Act. The Forum has become the primary means for the Basin States to coordinate with federal agencies and Congress to support the implementation of the salinity control program for the Colorado River Basin.

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act was authorized by Congress and signed into law in 1974. This authorized the Secretary of the Interior to initiate the Program, and it created the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council representing the seven Basin States. This federal advisory committee works closely with the Forum.

Colorado River water is used by approximately 40 million people and irrigates approximately 4 million acres in the United States. Bureau of Reclamation studies show that quantified damages from Colorado River salinity to United States water users are about \$376 million per year. Unquantified damages are greater. Reclamation's modeling indicates that the quantifiable damages would increase to \$577 million per year by 2030 if the Program is not continued. Control of salinity is necessary for the states of the Colorado River Basin, including New Mexico, to continue to develop their compact-apportioned waters of the Colorado River.

Timely appropriations for the funding of the salinity control program are essential to comply with the water quality standards for salinity, prevent unnecessary economic damages in the United States, and protect the quality of the water that the United States is obligated to deliver to Mexico. The Basin States and federal agencies agree that increases in the salinity of the Colorado River will result in significant increases in damages to water users in the Lower Colorado River Basin. Continued strong support and adequate funding of the salinity control program is required to control salinity-related damages in the United States and Mexico.

Congress amended the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act in July 1995 (Public Law 104-20), creating Reclamation's Basinwide Program. The Basinwide Program has proven to be cost-effective, and the Basin States are standing ready with up-front cost-sharing. Proposals from public and private sector entities in response to Reclamation's requests for proposals and funding opportunity announcements have far exceeded available funding appropriated in recent years. Basin States cost-sharing funds are available for the \$15.4 million appropriation request for fiscal year 2014. The Basin States' cost-sharing adds 43 cents for each federal dollar appropriated.

Public Law 106-459 gave the Bureau of Reclamation additional spending authority for the salinity control program. With the additional authority in place and significant cost-sharing available from the Basin States, it is important that the salinity control program be funded at the level requested by the Forum and Basin States to protect the water quality of the Colorado River. Some of the most cost-effective salinity control opportunities occur when Reclamation improves irrigation delivery systems concurrently with on-farm irrigation improvements undertaken by the U.S. Department

of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The Basin States cost-share funding is available for both on-farm and off-farm improvements. The EQIP funding appears to be adequate to accomplish the on-farm work. Adequate funding for Reclamation's off-farm work is needed to maintain timely implementation and effectiveness of salinity control measures.

I urge the Congress to appropriate \$15.4 million to the Bureau of Reclamation for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program, plus adequate funding for operation and maintenance of existing projects and adequate funding to identify new salinity control opportunities. This investment in water quality will pay for itself many times over. Also, I fully support testimony by the Forum's Executive Director, Don Barnett, in request of this appropriation.

Estevan R. López, P.E.
Director, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

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Statement of
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SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

in support of

FY 2014 Appropriations for BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT activities
to benefit COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL,
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

May 1, 2013

SUMMARY

This Statement is submitted in support of Fiscal Year 2014 appropriations for Colorado River Basin salinity control activities of the Bureau of Land Management. I urge that at least \$5,200,000 be appropriated for the Bureau of Land Management within the Soil, Water, and Air Program for general water quality improvement efforts in the Colorado River Basin, and an additional \$1,500,000 be appropriated specifically for salinity control related projects and studies.

STATEMENT

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) is comprised of representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin States appointed by the respective governors of the states. The Forum has examined the features needed to control the salinity of the Colorado River. These include activities by the states, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Salinity Control Program has been adopted by the seven Colorado River Basin States and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency as a part of each state's water quality standards.

About 75 percent of the land in the Colorado River Basin is owned, administered or held in trust by the federal government. The BLM is the largest land manager in the Colorado River Basin, and manages public lands that are heavily laden with naturally occurring salt. When salt-laden soils erode, the salts dissolve and enter the river system, affecting the quality of water used from the Colorado River by the Lower Basin States and Mexico.

I support past federal legislation that declared that the federal government has a

major and important responsibility with respect to controlling salt discharge from public lands. Congress has charged the federal agencies to proceed with programs to control the salinity of the Colorado River Basin with a strong mandate to seek out the most cost-effective solutions. The BLM's rangeland improvement programs are some of the most cost-effective salinity control measures available. In addition, these programs are environmentally acceptable and control erosion, increase grazing opportunities, produce dependable stream run-off and enhance wildlife habitat.

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At the urging of the Basin States, the BLM has created a full time position to coordinate its activities among the BLM state offices and other federal agencies involved in implementation of the salinity control program. The BLM's Budget Justification documents have stated that BLM continues to implement on-the-ground projects, evaluate progress in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture, and report salt retention measures to implement and maintain salinity control measures of the federal salinity control program in the Colorado River Basin. The BLM is to be commended for its commitment to cooperate and coordinate with the Basin States and other federal agencies. The Basin States and I are pleased with the BLM administration's responsiveness in addressing the need for renewed emphasis on its efforts to control salinity sources and to comply with BLM responsibilities pursuant to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, as amended.

To continue these efforts, I request the appropriation of at least \$5.2 million in FY 2014 for general water quality improvement efforts in the Colorado River Basin by the BLM within the Soil, Water, and Air Program, and that an additional \$1.5 million be

appropriated specifically for salinity control related projects and studies. I appreciate consideration of these requests. I fully support the statement of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum submitted by Don Barnett, the Forum's Executive Director, in request of appropriations for BLM for Colorado River salinity control activities.

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Director, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

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