

**JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE LEGISLATURE URGING  
ANALYSIS OF COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT**

2015 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Jim Dabakis**

House Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

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**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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

59 WHEREAS, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences  
60 provides expert advice on some of the most pressing challenges facing the nation and the  
61 world;

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

66 WHEREAS, the National Research Council has previously studied the Colorado River;  
67 and

68 WHEREAS, a new analysis would supplement and enhance the Colorado River Basin  
69 Study recently completed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation:

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

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

- 77 • the likelihood that future Colorado River flows will be sufficient to meet  
78 Colorado River Compact allocations;
- 79 • the ability of groundwater stocks to sustain projected demand;
- 80 • techniques and technologies available to increase water use efficiency  
81 across the spectrum of Colorado River Basin water users;
- 82 • flood risks and flood management strategies to minimize exposure and  
83 damage;
- 84 • viability of underground aquifers to substitute for above ground water  
85 storage;
- 86 • strategies to remove hazards to the Colorado River's threatened and  
87 endangered species, as well as to reestablish viable populations of those  
88 species that are extirpated or extinct;
- 89 • flow requirements for the permanent restoration of sufficient delta

90 wetland habitat and to allow for the cleanup of the Salton Sea; and  
91 • scenarios for meeting the region's future water needs that provide  
92 resilience in times of shortages and effective management in times of  
93 flood and that maximize the potential for environmental preservation  
94 and restoration.

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

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**Legislative Review Note**  
**as of 2-10-15 9:51 AM**

**Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel**