



**Shared Vision for the Upper Basin of the Colorado River Basin:
A Resolution for Sustainability¹**

**Developed by Federally Recognized Tribes & Conservation Groups
in the Upper Basin**

The purpose of this document is to present a shared vision for the future of the Upper Basin of the Colorado River Basin. It was developed through a dialogue among federally recognized Tribes and conservation groups working in the Upper Basin and is intended to serve as a framework for Tribes and conservation groups to work together on issues of shared interest.

The conservation groups recognize the unique role of Tribal Nations as sovereign governments with Indian water right interests in the Colorado River. The Tribal Nations recognize the unique role of the conservation groups in advocating for the sustainability of the Colorado River. This vision statement, presented in the form of a resolution, represents the commitment of Tribes and conservation groups in the Upper Basin to identify joint interests and to create a platform to work together for the Colorado River Basin.

Although this vision statement was developed to guide the joint efforts of Tribes and conservation groups in the Upper Basin, these entities invite other interested individuals and organizations to adopt this vision as a set of guiding principles for developing the next

¹ The original draft of this “sustainability resolution” can be found in *A Common Vision for the Colorado River System: Toward a Framework for Sustainability* (Policy Brief #3, Water & Tribes Initiative, October 2020). <http://naturalresourcespolicy.org/docs/policybrief3finalweb.pdf>. It is based on several tribal visions for the river system’s future, along with visions presented in *Toward a Sense of the Basin*, a report prepared by the Water & Tribes Initiative in 2020 based on interviews and workshops with more than 100 tribal and other leaders in and around the Basin. The “sustainability resolution” synthesizes common values and visions among these sources.

management framework for the Colorado River Basin and to otherwise enhance land and water management in the Upper Basin.

1. Whereas water is life; it is a precious, life-giving resource; and
2. Whereas free-flowing rivers, healthy habitats, and resilient ecosystems are essential for nature and human communities to thrive; and
3. Whereas water is foundational to the continued existence of Tribes in the Basin and provides the critical natural resource for the establishment of permanent homelands; and
4. Whereas water is also essential for spiritual, cultural, and ecological purposes, as well as for sustaining human populations and economies, including urban, rural, and Tribal communities; domestic, stock-watering, municipal, agricultural, industrial, recreational, environmental, and other uses; and to more than 40 million people, including 30 federally recognized sovereign Tribal nations and two countries; and
5. Whereas water is sacred and essential to Tribal prayer ceremonies since time immemorial; and
6. Whereas Tribes have been stewards of their natural resources since time immemorial and developed effective indigenous management techniques to support the health of the rivers, creeks, and springs; and
7. Whereas natural and cultural resources conservation are inter-connected; and
8. Whereas the development and use of water is a legal right held by sovereign Tribal Nations in the Colorado River Basin pursuant to Treaties with the United States.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that Tribes and conservation groups working in the Upper Basin agree to:

- a) Promote and support the sustainable, resilient use of the Colorado River and its tributaries for people and the rest of nature; and
- b) Promote and support reliable access to clean water for all Tribal members and other residents of the Colorado River Basin; and
- c) Ensure the spiritual, cultural, and ecological integrity of the Colorado River Basin while providing water for Tribal homelands and other human use and consumption; and

- d) Incorporate the contemporary diversity of needs, interests, and priorities, historical use patterns, and the realities of drought and climate change; and
- e) Recognize and honor the sovereignty of Tribal nations and the unique nature of Indian reserved water rights to protect Tribal apportionments in the Colorado River Basin; and
- f) Restore and steward the land and water systems to ensure the ecological integrity of watersheds within the Colorado River Basin; and
- g) Honor, respect, and support the federal government’s trust responsibility for the Basin’s Tribes in a manner that acknowledges their sovereignty and right to self-determination; and
- h) Provide for flexible water management strategies that contribute to basin-wide water security for all water users, including the environment; and
- i) Integrate traditional indigenous knowledge with western science to better represent the consequences of alternative management scenarios in the Colorado River Basin; and
- j) Provide access to existing and develop new sources of funding to carry out the programs and activities that support the priorities identified here; and
- k) Respond to the realities of a changing climate and the resulting hydrology; and
- l) Engage in collaboration to promote our shared vision for developing policy and problem-solving.

Endorsed by the following Tribes and conservation organizations:

Jicarilla Apache Nation
 Southern Ute Indian Tribe
 Ute Indian Tribe
 Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
 Navajo Nation
 Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

American Rivers
 Environmental Defense Fund
 Living Rivers
 National Audubon Society
 National Wildlife Federation
 Sonoran Institute
 The Nature Conservancy
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
 Partnership
 Trout Unlimited
 Western Resource Advocates