

For Immediate Release

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Colorado River Indian Tribes Receive WaterSMART Grant Award to Conserve Water

(PARKER, AZ.) Today, the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) announced they will receive a \$250,000 federal grant from the Department of the Interior. This award was made possible only after the tribe, Arizona Senator Martha McSally, and Rep. Raul Grijalva championed a fix to federal law permit tribes to accept WaterSMART grants and protect their tribal water rights for future development. Previously tribes were required to relinquish the conserved part of their water rights when accepting federal funding.

The grant, from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Water SMART program, is matched by \$250,000 from CRIT. The total \$500,000 will be used to upgrade the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, on the BIA Irrigation Project. CRIT is funding this improvement to the BIA project to better track and monitor irrigation water to ensure it goes where it's needed, when it's needed. The Tribes anticipate the new SCADA will help prevent canal breaches and save approximately 10,000 acre-feet annually.

“The people of the Colorado River Indian Tribes have lived in harmony with the Colorado River since time immemorial,” said Dennis Patch, CRIT Chairman. “This new monitoring system ensures that our Tribe makes the best possible use of our water and contributes further to the preservation of the Colorado River so that it will remain a resource for our region for years to come.”

In 2018, CRIT agreed to fallow certain parcels of Reservation lands and make 150,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water available to support water levels in Lake Mead. This conservation was a critical component of the Arizona intra-state agreement accompanying the federal Drought Contingency Plan.

“CRIT has always been committed to water conservation on our reservation,” said CRIT Vice Chairman Keith Moses. “Between our DCP contributions and now this new investment in water saving technology, the Tribe continues to demonstrate that we are committed to responsible water management.”

CRIT has the first priority decreed water right to divert 719,248 acre-feet per year to serve lands in both Arizona and California. System inefficiencies in the BIA Colorado River Irrigation Project, and a lack of infrastructure for agriculture development prevent the Tribes from fully utilizing its water.

About the Colorado River Indian Tribes:

The Colorado River Indian Tribes include four distinct Tribes - the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo. There are currently about 4,434 Tribal members. The CRIT Reservation was created in 1865 by the Federal Government originally for the Mohave and Chemehuevi, who had inhabited the area for centuries. People of the Hopi and Navajo Tribes were relocated to the reservation in later years. The reservation stretches along the Colorado River on both the Arizona and California side. It includes approximately 300,000 acres of land, with the river serving as the focal point and lifeblood of the area.