

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 11, 2021

Tanya Trujillo  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Water and Science  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Camille Calimlim Touton  
Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Trujillo and Deputy Commissioner Touton:

We write today concerning funding for a desperately needed drinking water system for the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) settled their water rights claims when the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 became law. To address the significant drinking water needs on the tribe's reservation, the act authorized construction of a dam and conveyance system, known as the Rural Water System, to deliver water to the tribe and surrounding communities.

One of the conditions for enforcing the act is that the "Secretary has issued a record of decision approving the construction of the WMAT rural water system in a configuration substantially similar to that described in section 307". The record of decision may not be issued until the design of the Rural Water System is approved by the Bureau of Reclamation. That design, however, has been delayed due to a cost overrun with a component of the Rural Water System.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe Rural Water System Loan Authorization Act, which was signed into law in 2008, was intended to cover the design of the Rural Water System and the environmental impact statement. Approximately \$12 million was made available to the tribe, but this amount fell short of the estimated \$25 million needed to complete the environmental impact statement, the record of decision, and 30 percent of the design. Currently, \$13 million in infrastructure funding is needed. These funds will be used to reimburse the tribe for the \$7 million it has spent to date, plus an additional \$6 million to complete 30 percent of the Rural Water System design required by the record of decision.

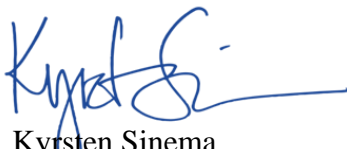
To ensure that the Rural Water System can be completed and the tribe has a safe and reliable water supply, we are requesting that the Bureau of Reclamation utilize any allocated funds in its fiscal year 2021 budget to fund as much of this shortfall as possible. To the extent that the

Bureau is unable to fund the full \$13 million, we request that it include sufficient funding in its fiscal year 2022 budget request.

If the Rural Water System is delayed or fails for any reason, the tribe will continue to face drinking water shortages and all of the health risks, including COVID-19, associated with a lack of access to a safe and reliable water supply.

In accordance with all existing agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines, I respectfully ask that you give this proposal full and fair consideration as you make this important decision. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



Mark Kelly  
United States Senator



Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

cc: Ms. Leslie Meyers, Reclamation Phoenix Area Office Manager