



National Audubon Society  
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September 9, 2024

The Honorable Mark Kelly  
U.S. Senate  
516 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema  
U.S. Senate  
317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1203 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Schweikert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
460 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Gosar  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2057 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ruben Gallego  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1114 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Andy Biggs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
252 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Debbie Lesko  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1214 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Stanton  
U.S. House of Representatives  
207 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Juan Ciscomani  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1429 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eli Crane  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1229 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Support for the Yavapai-Apache Nation Water Rights Settlement Act of 2024**

Dear Arizona Congressional Delegation:

The National Audubon Society (Audubon) protects birds, and the places they need, today and tomorrow. It is with great enthusiasm that we write on behalf of Audubon in support of the Yavapai-Apache Nation's water rights settlement and pending legislation, the Yavapai-Apache Nation Water Rights Settlement Act of 2024.

The [Yavapai-Apache Nation](#) and other parties in Arizona have come to a historic agreement with the settlement now before Congress. Not only will this settlement—when passed by Congress and signed by the President—ensure a reliable and sustainable water supply for the Yavapai-Apache Nation in north central Arizona’s iconic “Verde Valley,” it will preserve the Verde River and its precious habitat by reducing reliance on groundwater.

Audubon’s focus on birds means we also prioritize the protection of the habitat they need. Within the Verde Valley, we have identified four Important Bird Areas, all of which rely on healthy groundwater levels to sustain flowing rivers and streams and the rich plant life and wildlife they support. This settlement will also help sustain a portion of the Verde River downstream of the Yavapai-Apache Nation that was designated as a Wild and Scenic River by Congress in 1984.

The settlement is the result of innovative and creative thinking from the Yavapai-Apache Nation, Salt River Project, the Town of Camp Verde, the Town of Cottonwood, the Town of Clarkdale, and others. The settlement includes building a 60-mile water pipeline from C.C. Cragin Reservoir on the Mogollon Rim, north of Payson, increasing the capture of wastewater into sewer systems, boosting the use of reclaimed water, and the potential for regional water planning and collaboration among nearby municipalities and the Yavapai-Apache Nation.

Audubon Southwest, our regional office in Arizona and New Mexico, is also part of the [Water for Arizona Coalition](#). In 2022, Water for Arizona outlined a vision for how to improve Arizona’s water outlook, called the [Arizona Water Security Plan](#). One of the six key tenets is: Continue to support Tribes in resolving Tribal water issues. This settlement is a key milestone as Arizona works to improve its overall water security.

It is long past due for the Yavapai-Apache Nation to have secure and reliable water supplies, and this settlement is a monumental step forward for their growing community. We urge you to support the passage of the settlement and the provision of approximately \$1 billion to ensure the project is brought to completion.

Thank you for your consideration of this water rights settlement for the Yavapai-Apache Nation.

Sincerely,



Julie Hill-Gabriel  
Vice President, Water Conservation  
National Audubon Society



Jonathan Hayes  
Vice President and Executive Director  
Audubon Southwest

CC:

The Honorable Tanya Lewis, Chairwoman, Yavapai-Apache Nation  
Pamela Williams, Director, Secretary’s Indian Water Rights Office, Department of the Interior