

House Engrossed

Colorado River; cause of decline

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-seventh Legislature
First Regular Session
2025

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 2046

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING FOREST MISMANAGEMENT AND SALT CEDARS AS THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF WATER DEPLETION OF THE COLORADO RIVER AND SUPPORTING ERADICATION OF THESE CAUSES.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Whereas, the Colorado River system has experienced declines in
2 annual inflow from runoff; and

3 Whereas, this reduction in annual inflow has reduced water supplies
4 for people, agriculture and businesses; and

5 Whereas, the causes of the declines are a variety of factors,
6 including historic drought, evapotranspiration and salt cedars; and

7 Whereas, the Colorado River Basin has been in a drought since 2000,
8 resulting in decreased precipitation in the Upper Colorado River Basin
9 watersheds and tributaries that feed the main stem of the Colorado
10 River; and

11 Whereas, public land managers have allowed forests to grow
12 unnaturally, becoming clogged with far too many trees; and

13 Whereas, overgrown forests cause higher depletion of water before
14 ever reaching the river; and

15 Whereas, the United States Bureau of Reclamation estimates that the
16 Colorado River loses almost 4 million acre-feet of water per year to
17 evapotranspiration. Arizona's share of the Colorado River is only 2.8
18 million acre-feet; and

19 Whereas, state and federal forest mismanagement has allowed this
20 evapotranspiration to increase, reducing this state's gains in water
21 conservation. More needs to be done to address the overgrown forests in
22 the Colorado River watershed; and

23 Whereas, the salt cedar tree, also known as the tamarisk, was
24 brought to the United States in the 1800s as an ornamental plant. It is
25 now listed as an invasive species by the United States Department of
26 Agriculture; and

27 Whereas, this invasive plant out-competes native cottonwood,
28 mesquite and willow, altering the ecology and hydrology of native systems.
29 One tree can drink more than 200 gallons of water per day; and

30 Whereas, salt cedar trees have spread across virtually every river
31 system in half of the United States, consuming unfathomable amounts of
32 water; and

33 Whereas, salt cedars now cover nearly two million acres of river
34 banks; and

35 Whereas, salt cedars often grow in stands of over 3,000 trees per
36 acre, constituting nearly 672 acre-feet of water consumed per acre per
37 year; and

38 Whereas, salt cedars remain one of the most difficult of all
39 nonnative species to control and are perhaps the nation's most insidious
40 water problem. Eradicating them from American rivers would constitute one
41 of the largest water projects in history; and

42 Whereas, in 2003 and 2006, Congress gave over \$50 million to
43 research universities to conduct studies and to nonprofit organizations to
44 conduct demonstration projects, yet salt cedars still thrive; and

1 Whereas, organizations have raised awareness and made progress in
2 organizing eradication efforts but they are woefully underfunded, raising
3 less than \$4 million per year and restoring less than 2,000 acres per
4 year. More needs to be done to address and eradicate salt cedars from the
5 American West.

6 Therefore

7 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona,
8 the Senate concurring:

9 1. That the mismanagement of overgrown forests and the
10 proliferation of water-depleting plants like salt cedars in American
11 watersheds are reducing annual flows to the Colorado River.

12 2. That state and federal legislators and government administrators
13 should acknowledge that until the issues of forest mismanagement and salt
14 cedar proliferation are addressed, any proactive conservation efforts or
15 investments that state or private organizations make will be consumed by
16 the additional proliferation of forest stands and salt cedars.

17 3. That state and federal legislators and government administrators
18 should support the eradication of salt cedars and the management of
19 overgrown forests, which would provide substantial volumes of water.

20 4. That state and federal legislators and government administrators
21 should determine that eradicating salt cedars and responsibly managing
22 forests in the West presents an opportunity to substantially increase the
23 availability of water in the Colorado River and other rivers in the West.

24 5. That the United States Congress should fund the eradication of
25 salt cedars and enable the responsible mechanical thinning of unhealthy
26 overgrown forests in the West.

27 6. That the Secretary of State of the State of Arizona transmit a
28 copy of this Resolution to the President of the United States, the
29 President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States
30 House of Representatives, the Secretary of the United States Department of
31 the Interior, the Chief of the United States Forest Service, the
32 Commissioner of the United States Bureau of Reclamation and each Member of
33 Congress from the State of Arizona.

PASSED BY THE HOUSE MARCH 12, 2025.

PASSED BY THE SENATE MAY 6, 2025.

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE MAY 7, 2025.