Madam Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

I’m Kim Mitchell, the Senior Water Policy Advisor for the Healthy Rivers Program at Western Resource Advocates.

We are one of the leading, solution-oriented conservation groups working to protect the health of Western rivers and lakes. In Arizona we’re looking to secure and support agreements that allow water levels in Lake Mead to be enhanced and maintained at sustainable levels so that the Colorado River continues to support communities, farms and ranches, Tribes, and the environment.

Western Resource Advocates and our coalition partners at Water for Arizona are grateful to this committee for your efforts to address these challenging water scarcity issues.

Recent reports from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation tell us the combined capacity of Lake Powell and Lake Mead is the lowest on record during this 19-year drought and since Lake Powell began filling in the 1960s. We’re facing a 57% chance of a shortage declaration next year with the odds increasing in future years.

The Colorado River – the source of 40% of Arizona’s water supply – is over-allocated and future supplies are less reliable. The challenges our state faces on the Colorado River are significant. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t solutions. We need to update how we use and manage our water and continued conservation and innovative partnerships are more necessary than ever.

The Arizona DCP Implementation Plan is a collection of agreements and related legislation that does just that. It’s a result of months of collaboration among Arizona stakeholders that will conserve water in Lake Mead and allow for some very creative partnerships to help move water around more easily, thereby lessening the impact to water users.

The plan is balanced because CAP will order water it legally controls from Lake Mead to provide mitigation to impacted water users, while the System Conservation Offset Program adds more water to the lake than the CAP orders remove. In short, Arizona’s DCP Implementation Plan will have a net positive benefit to the system.
Not all stakeholders received everything they wanted out of this deal, but it provides a number of concessions to those impacted the most, sharing the pain and gain more equitably.

As water becomes increasingly scarce in our state, we believe Arizona can address impending water shortages through innovative mechanisms that help manage our limited supplies with flexibility.

Authorizing Director Buschatzke to sign the DCP and approving the companion legislation before you is an important step and will provide a critical safety net for the next few years while allowing us to plan for the health of our state’s future water supply.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our thoughts and I’m happy to answer any questions.