Vice Chairman Jeffrey McClure
Pinal County Board of Supervisors
District 4

PINAL COUNTY
WIDE OPEN OPPORTUNITY

July 16, 2025

Jessie Durham
Regional Director, Western Region
Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
2600 North Central Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding Deteriorating Electricity Service and Soaring Costs for San Carlos Irrigation Project (SCIP) Customers

Dear Jessie Durham,

As the Vice Chairman of the Pinal County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express grave concerns regarding the escalating and compounding hardships faced by residents who rely on the San Carlos Irrigation Project (SCIP) for electricity. Communities in the Copper Corridor and other vulnerable areas of Pinal County are experiencing a palpable sense of panic as electric bills have risen dramatically while the quality of service has steadily declined.

Many residents, particularly those on fixed incomes often relying solely on Social Security, are finding the recurring annual rate increases to be not just an inconvenience, but a crisis. In some severe cases, families are being forced to make impossible choices between running air conditioning in dangerously high temperatures and affording essential medications and doctor visits. This is an unacceptable burden on our most at-risk citizens.

In addition to these unexpected rate increases, residents are enduring frequent power outages. These outages are both unplanned – due to storm damage or equipment failure – and planned by SCIP, but often without advance communication. Such disruptions frequently pose significant health and safety risks, including the disruption to use of essential medical equipment and heat related priority populations like the elderly and young. Furthermore, the temporary fixes employed to restore power often result in damaging power fluctuations, which have repeatedly led to unnecessary and costly appliance replacements and repairs for residents. These health, safety, financial, and logistical burdens are not the norm for other electric utilities across our state and are entirely unacceptable.

Compounding these issues, SCIP's limited office hours (Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM–4:30 PM) are more akin to bankers' hours than those of a utility providing a life-sustaining essential service. It is unconscionable to expect individuals working standard 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM jobs to be able to communicate effectively with SCIP. What makes matters worse is the complete lack of proactive communication and customer support during service interruptions. There is no dedicated section on SCIP’s website to report or obtain information about outages. Customers attempting to call for information rarely get to speak with an actual person. I have personally witnessed and been dismayed by SCIP employees scoffing at the mere mention of attending an important customer meeting after hours. This level of customer service is truly shameful.

To highlight the real-life consequences of SCIP's practices and emphasize the gravity of these issues, below is a selection of comments from affected residents gathered over just the past few days:

- "It's surged 5 times in the last 45 minutes in Florence Gardens."
- "Anyone else feel like they're experiencing a brownout? Our microwave is on but won't work. Numerous lights in the house barely come on. Floor fans are not fully running. And we can tell our A/C units aren't running at full capacity either. I'm so worried about all of our electronics."
- "5 brownouts in Mammoth, AZ in less than an hour. Refrigerator is now dead because of this. Called the phone number but they say it's 'above their heads.' No way to check for further brownouts, outages, or potential problems. This is an unprofessional way to deal with this. They evade every question you ask if you, by chance, get someone on the phone. No accountability on the loss of appliances here or the extremely high bills we pay."
- "I've been experiencing low power, lights are dim, microwave barely works and multiple power outages. I've been calling SCIP and reporting every single time this happens, and nothing has been fixed. SCIP is claiming that I'm the only one calling about these issues."
- "Does anyone have any written communication from the power company regarding the surges and affected areas? I need something to show my job; I work from home and already requested this from them but they haven't responded and was hoping to see if anyone else has anything?"
- "Bills are crazy expensive and we never have power! Quick to send out our bills but can never communicate about all the outages we've been having!"

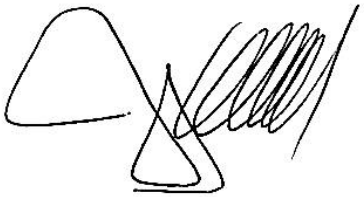
To better understand how SCIP operates and to identify needed reforms, I request answers to the following questions:

1. **Operational Guidelines**
    - Does SCIP maintain an operations manual or standard procedures?
    - Is this document available to the public? If so, please provide a copy or link.
2. **Customer Communication Protocols**
    - What are SCIP's procedures for notifying customers of outages, both planned and unplanned?
    - How are customers alerted during and outside of business hours?
3. **Emergency Services**
    - What specific emergency services does SCIP provide to its customers and the public during an outage?
    - What protocols are in place to notify county and city emergency services departments of power-related emergencies or significant outages?
4. **Scheduling of Planned Outages**
    - Are planned outages scheduled during hours that minimize disruption to customers?
    - What considerations guide the timing of these outages?
5. **Outage Reporting and Logs**
    - How can customers report outages to SCIP?
    - Does SCIP maintain a log of outages (planned and unplanned)? If so, please provide a copy or summary for the last 12 months.
6. **Service Reliability and Industry Standards**
    - Does SCIP meet current electric utility industry standards for reliability and service quality?
    - If not, please explain.
    - If so, how does SCIP monitor and track service lapses or deviations from these standards? Please include any related documentation.

7. **Billing Support and Customer Protection**
    - What payment plans or financial assistance options are available to customers struggling to pay their bills?
    - Does SCIP offer a moratorium on disconnections during the summer months when temperatures are dangerously high?

Ultimately, this is not just a utility issue; it is a public health, safety, and economic crisis. I request your prompt attention and response to the questions and concerns outlined above. I am committed to advocating on behalf of my constituents and will continue pressing for accountability, reform, and oversight until meaningful change is achieved.

Respectfully,



Jeffrey McClure
Vice Chairman
Pinal County Board of Supervisors

CC: Director Bryan Mercier
Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240