

**MONTHLY REPORT TO THE  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA**

July 13, 2022

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT**

As of July 11<sup>th</sup>, the surface water elevation of Lake Powell was 3,539.45 feet with nearly 6.41 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 28% of capacity. The surface water elevation of Lake Mead was 1,041.99 feet with 7.11 MAF of storage, or 27% of capacity. As of July 10<sup>th</sup>, the total System storage was 20.37 MAF, or 35% of capacity, which is about 4.12 MAF less than the total System storage at this same time last year.

As of July 6<sup>th</sup>, storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, included the following volumes: 97% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 75% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 94% of capacity at Morrow Point and 47% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 57% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of July 5<sup>th</sup>, the June observed inflow into Lake Powell was 1.28 MAF (52% of normal) and the July forecasted inflow is 0.34 MAF (35% of normal). The preliminary forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year (WY) 2022 is 5.74 MAF (60% of normal). The forecasted April through July 2022 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell is 3.6 MAF (56% of normal). To date, WY-2022 precipitation is 96% of normal.

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES**

Colorado River Basin States Near-Term Drought Response Actions

Elevations at both Powell and Mead continue to decline, despite the reduction in release from Glen Canyon Dam from 7.48 to 7.0 MAF in WY-2022 and the ongoing 2022 Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) release of 0.500 MAF from upstream reservoirs. Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton testified before the U.S. Senate's Energy & Natural Resources Committee on Tuesday, June 14, and shared that Reclamation believes that between 2-4 MAF of additional conservation will be needed to keep Lakes Powell and Mead above critical elevations in the coming year.

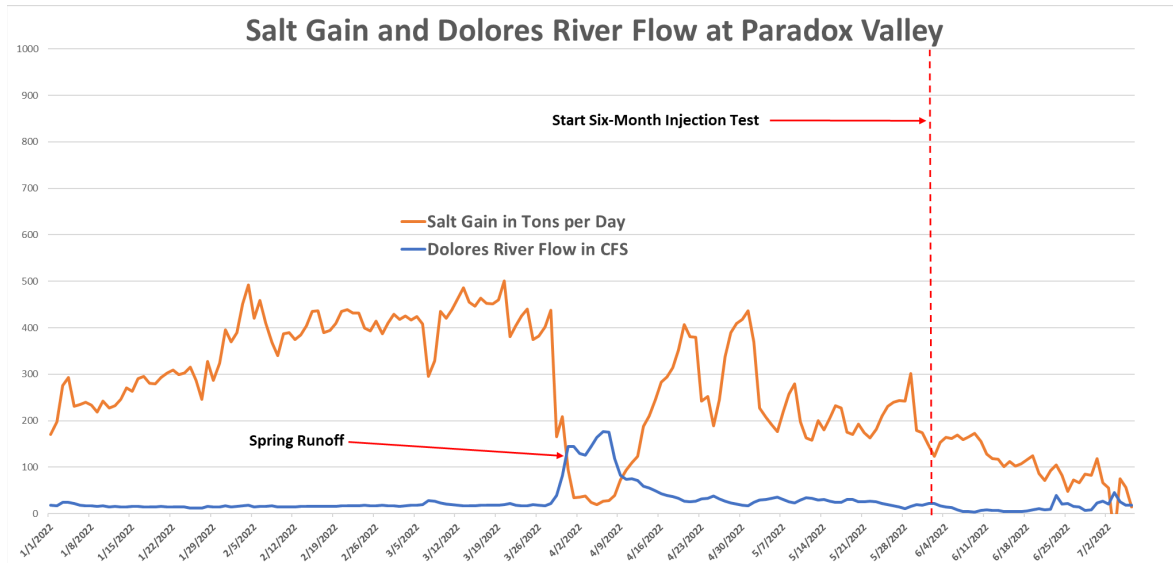
Reclamation has hosted a series of focused technical working group meetings with representatives of the Basin states and water users in determining what additional actions can be developed for implementation during the period 2023-2026. Reclamation believes that these actions must be identified and agreed upon by the time of the release of August 2022 24-Month Study Report in order to provide specific operational clarity and guidance for inclusion in the 2023 Annual Operating Plan (AOP). Absent development of a consensus-based plan for reductions in water uses, water conservation programs, recycling and reuse, and water supply augmentation, Reclamation has indicated that it will take actions appropriate to protect and manage System infrastructure and maintain some level of water supply availability in the Basin.

### Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program Implementation

#### *Paradox Valley Unit Brine Injection Test*

On June 1, 2022, the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) initiated a planned 6-month test of brine injection operations to gather additional data to help guide future operational decisions. This resumption of operations comes after injection operations were suspended March 4, 2019, immediately after a 4.5 magnitude earthquake. The injection test is currently in Phase III with no concerns observed. The injection pressure is a little lower than the previous test in May 2020 and the seismicity is normal. There appears to be no significant adverse effects to well performance and likely a positive effect on near well seismicity (in the short term) from the extended shutdown. However, the risk of adverse levels of seismicity increases as time goes on.

The PVU is located along the Dolores River in western Montrose County, approximately 50 miles southwest of Grand Junction, Colorado, and 10 miles east of the Colorado-Utah border. Its purpose is to extract naturally occurring brine groundwater in the Paradox Valley, thereby preventing it from entering the Dolores River, which is a major tributary of the Colorado River. The figure below shows the observed salt load and flow in the Dolores River in relation to the current brine injection test.



### *Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council and Forum Work Group meetings*

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council met via webinar on July 7, 2022. The Advisory Council provides advice to the federal agencies in program administration including the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, and the Administrator of the EPA. At the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting the Advisory Council approved support for a letter by the Salinity Control Forum to Reclamation with recommendations regarding FY-2022 management of the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund. The Advisory Council also approved recommendations from the Technical Advisory Group to provide funding for salinity control research in the Basin. Two studies approved for funding are 1) the reassessment of hydrologic conditions and salinity loading associated with agricultural areas around Green River, Utah; and 2) the refined assessment of salinity loading to the Colorado River in Spanish Valley, Utah, where the town of Moab is located.

### Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

The Technical Work Group (TWG) of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) met via webinar June 15 - 16.

The TWG received a report regarding a stakeholder letter submitted to the Secretary of the Interior regarding perceived flaws in the GCDAMP. Via the letter, environmental groups and tribes expressed concern that the GCDAMP has not seriously acknowledged nor successfully integrated tribal perspectives and concerns over the Colorado River Ecosystem (CRE) as an ancestral homeland; the need to continue to test and use high flow experiments (HFEs), and

particularly springtime HFEs, to rehabilitate CRE shoreline habitats and rejuvenate recreational camping beaches; that drought-related climate change has not been sufficiently incorporated into planning and implementation of the GCDAMP; and requesting clarification regarding the relationship between the GCDAMP and the DROA process.

Wayne Pullan, Upper Colorado Basin Regional Director at Bureau of Reclamation and the Secretary's Designee to the GCDAMP, provided clarification regarding direction to Reclamation and the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC) to work with the TWG regarding development of a draft strategic plan to prevent, detect, and respond to cool- and warmwater invasive fish establishment below Glen Canyon Dam and to develop operational alternatives that could help prevent cool and warmwater invasive fish establishment, while minimizing potential adverse effects to other resources.

The TWG passed a resolution recommending an FY 2023 budget to the Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) for approval by the Secretary of Interior.

The TWG received a report on the effect of drought-related changes in water quality on rainbow trout in Glen Canyon. Effects of competition, water temperature, and phosphorous concentration appear to have a larger effect on rainbow trout growth than do flow experiments such as macroinvertebrate (bug) flows and HFEs. Larger rainbow trout are anticipated to experience severe weight loss in 2022/2023 due to current conditions. There is concern about the viability of the fishery.

The TWG received a report on the state of beaches below Glen Canyon Dam. The lack of an HFE in 2021 has resulted in visible beach degradation when comparing pictures taken in 2021 to historical photographs.

Finally, the AMWG will meet August 17-18 and the TWG will hold its next meeting on October 12-13, both via webinar.

### Non-Native Fish

The National Park Service (NPS) has confirmed the presence of smallmouth bass below Glen Canyon Dam. Several young of year smallmouth bass were captured in a backwater several miles downstream from Glen Canyon Dam. The small size of the fish indicates that successful reproduction is likely taking place in the backwater. The NPS, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center are working to coordinating monitoring and response activities.

## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

### 2022 Drought Response Actions

#### Reclamation Initiates Public Process on Development of Future Colorado River Operations

On June 24, 2022, the Bureau of Reclamation published a Federal Register notice to assist in its efforts to develop future Colorado River operating provisions. Several decisional documents and agreements that govern the operation of crucial Colorado River facilities, Lakes Powell and Mead, and the management of Colorado River water will expire at the end of 2026. The notice seeks specific input on how to foster meaningful participation by all stakeholders in preparation for beginning the National Environmental Policy Act process to develop post-2026 operating approaches for the Colorado River, and operating strategies to address post-2026. Reclamation held public webinars on July 12 and 14, 2022, to further describe the requested input. The public input period ends September 1, 2022. Written comments on the proposed development of Post-2026 Colorado River Operational Strategies should be sent to [CRB-info@usbr.gov](mailto:CRB-info@usbr.gov). Additional information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/#/news-release/4248>

### Washington, D.C. Report

#### *Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Drought Hearing*

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources held a full committee hearing “to examine short- and long-term solutions to extreme drought in the Western U.S.” Witnesses included the following:

- Camille Touton, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
- John Entsminger, General Manager, Southern Nevada Water Authority
- Maurice Hall, Vice President for Climate Resilient Water Systems, Environmental Defense Fund
- Patrick O’Toole, President, Family Farm Alliance
- Charlie Stern, Specialist in Natural Resource Policy, Congressional Research Service

The big headline coming out of the hearing was a statement from Commissioner Touton that Reclamation must find a way to conserve somewhere between 2 MAF – 4 MAF to protect critical

levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead in 2023. Reclamation plans to have a plan by mid-August and at that time will also determine whether to declare a shortage under the Drought Response Operations Agreement. The hearing can be viewed [here](#).

We anticipate a mark-up of water and public land bills on July 21<sup>st</sup> in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Several bills of interest could be on the agenda, including Salton Sea legislation and a bill to reauthorize the Upper Colorado River Fish Recovery programs.

### *FY23 Appropriations*

The House has kicked off its FY23 appropriations process, unveiling the text of most of the 12 appropriations bills, including the Energy and Water bill which funds the Bureau of Reclamation.

Overall, the bill provides \$1.891 billion, an increase of \$476.7 million above the budget request including:

- \$75 million for WaterSMART Grants
- \$33 million for CALFED
- \$50 million for the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP)
- \$134 million for the WIIN Act Storage Account (used to fund Sites Reservoir)
- \$34 million for Drought Response under the WaterSMART Program
- \$12 million for WIIN Act desal projects

The bill itself includes language preventing the use of federal funds raising Shasta Dam.

### *Reconciliation Package*

The Senate Democrats continue to discuss a reconciliation package, significantly pared down from the initial proposal, which would focus on prescription drug costs and climate/energy provisions. We do not expect there to be a natural resource package as part of this effort.

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