



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA**

October 11, 2023

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT**

Happy New Water Year! Water Year 2024 (WY-2024) began on October 1<sup>st</sup>. As of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the surface water elevation of Lake Powell was 3,573.55 feet with nearly 8.79 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 38% of capacity. The surface water elevation of Lake Mead was 1,065.83 feet with 8.87 MAF of storage, or 34% of capacity. As of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the total System storage was 25.26 MAF, or 43% of capacity, which is about 5.71 MAF more than the total System storage at this time last year.

As of October 4<sup>th</sup>, storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, included the following volumes: 85% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 89% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 93% of capacity at Morrow Point and 75% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 69% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, September observed inflow into Lake Powell was 0.22 MAF (65% of normal) and the October inflow forecast is 0.40 MAF (88% of normal). The preliminary observed inflow into Lake Powell for WY-2023 is 13.42 MAF (140% of normal). The observed April through July 2023 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell was 10.62 MAF (166% of normal).

Finally, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) recently reported that the WY-2023 volume of the balancing releases being made from Glen Canyon Dam will total 8.58 MAF. Additionally, the expected total Calendar Year (CY) consumptive uses for the Lower Basin States and Mexico are about 7.3 MAF, with the total CY-2023 Lower Basin consumptive uses at about 5.83 MAF and Mexico's expected consumptive use at about 1.45 MAF. The combination of balancing releases, projected reductions in Lower Basin and Mexican water uses in CY-2023, and increased side-inflow contributions between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead will result in a gain of approximately 1.58 MAF in storage in Lake Mead.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES**

### Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum’s (Forum) Work Group (Work Group) met from September 26 – 27 in Salt Lake City, UT.

The Work Group discussed the “2023 Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards for Salinity, Colorado River System” (Triennial Review) The Forum did not receive any public comments during the recent public comment period noticed by the states. Edits are being incorporated into the Triennial Review at the request of Forum and Work Group members. The Work Group moved the Triennial Review forward for consideration by the Forum at its upcoming October meeting.

The Work Group received an update regarding operations at the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) salinity control unit. PVU experienced a shut down on May 8<sup>th</sup> to upgrade the SCADA System followed by an extended shutdown due to high river stage and low salt load. Brine stream injection operations were resumed on June 22, 2023.

The Salinity Control Forum will hold a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting on October 24–25, 2023, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

### Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

On October 4, 2023, Reclamation released a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the December 2016 Record of Decision for the Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) Final Environmental Impact Statement. The LTEMP SEIS will analyze: (1) flow options to prevent smallmouth bass and other warmwater invasive nonnative fish from becoming established below Glen Canyon Dam (by preventing additional spawning); and (2) new information regarding the sediment accounting window associated with the LTEMP High-Flow Experiment protocol. The draft LTEMP SEIS is anticipated to be made available for public review in the winter of 2023–2024 and the final LTEMP SEIS Record of Decision is anticipated to be available during early summer 2024. The NOI is available on the [Federal Register](#) website.

Reclamation is accepting comments as part of the public scoping process. Comments are being sought regarding the scope of specific operational guidelines, strategies, and any other issues that should be considered. The deadline to submit comments is November 3, 2023.

Reclamation will host two public webinars to provide summary information and receive oral comments: Wednesday, October 18, 2023, from 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM Mountain time and Friday, October 20, 2023, from 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM Mountain time. Registration for the webinars is available on Reclamation’s [website](#).

## **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES**

### Colorado River Basin States Activities

#### *Draft Interim Period Operations SEIS Update*

An updated revision of Reclamation’s Draft SEIS for Interim Period (2023-2026) Operations is expected to be released in late-October for a 45-day public review and comment period. This version of the draft SEIS includes an assessment and evaluation of the Lower Basin States Interim Period Plan to create an additional 3.0 MAF of conserved water supplies for storage in Lake Mead on top of the existing water reductions/contributions called for in the 2007 Interim Shortage Guidelines, 2019 Drought Contingency Plans, and Mexico’s activities and commitments contained within Minute No. 323. It is expected that comments on the revised draft SEIS would be submitted in mid- to late-December, and that a Final SEIS and Record of Decision could be issued in the first or second quarter of 2024.

#### *Reclamation’s Post-2026 Operating Guidelines Development Process Updates*

As reported at the Board meeting last month, Reclamation is currently reviewing all of the scoping comments received regarding the expected NEPA process for development of the post-2026 operating guidelines for the Colorado River System. Reclamation had requested information related to specific operational guidelines, strategies, and other relevant issues. Reclamation expects to issue a “Scoping Comments Report” by the end of the year and to make it available on its post-2026 webpage.

Reclamation held the second meeting of the federal/Tribal/Basin States leadership meeting. This forum is intended to ensure that sufficient coordination, communication, and information sharing can be effectively maintained and managed as the states and the tribes work collaboratively to develop the post-2026 operating guidelines. This is a forum that is expected to be utilized to help discuss and define elements like the scope of the guidelines, proposed federal action, and purpose and need statement for the post-2026 EIS.

Reclamation has also established a post-2026 stakeholder technical modeling working group. The purpose of this work group is to describe and review the expected modeling tools that Reclamation anticipates utilizing in the development and performance evaluation of proposed operational alternatives for analysis in the post-2026 EIS. Reclamation is ensuring that there is the ability for stakeholders to access modeling platforms and tools and relevant data and other information in a web-based environment. This will ensure greater transparency and stakeholder involvement and input in the analysis and evaluation of potential post-2026 operational strategies, including identification and selection of alternatives to be included in the draft EIS.

### Washington, D.C. Report

#### *DOI Deputy Secretary Beaudreau Resignation*

After serving more than two years as Deputy Secretary and nearly eight years with the Department of the Interior during the Obama administration, Deputy Secretary Tommy Beaudreau announced that he will depart his position at the end of October.

Deputy Secretary Beaudreau has helped lead the DOI's efforts on many of its highest priorities and most pressing issues, including ensuring the sustainability of the Colorado River system, implementation of billions of dollars through the President's Investing in America agenda, tackling the climate crisis by standing up clean energy infrastructure, conserving and protecting America's public lands, upholding trust and treaty obligations to Indian Country, and promoting the public's trust through the reforms of the Department's Law Enforcement Task Force.

#### *Wildfire and Water*

A federal wildfire commission submitted [a report](#) to Congress recommending new approaches to addressing the risk of catastrophic fire.

The Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, established by Congress in 2021, reiterates that protecting water supplies from high-severity fires is critical. Fires can introduce contaminants into drinking water pipes. Erosion, sediment, and debris complicates water treatment and endangers reservoirs, pumps, and treatment equipment.

The commission made several recommendations, including: expedite funding for water utilities in fire-affected areas, prioritize watershed protection as part of wildfire mitigation projects, and help local agencies with post-fire drinking water testing.

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