



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

June 12, 2024

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT

As of June 3rd, the water surface elevation of Lake Powell was 3,569.92 feet with nearly 8.51 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 37% of capacity. The water surface elevation of Lake Mead was 1,066.86 feet with 8.95 MAF of storage, or 34% of capacity. As of June 2nd, the total System storage was 24.80 MAF, or 42% of capacity, which is about 1.26 MAF more than the total System storage at this time last year.

As of June 5th, storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, included the following volumes: 51% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 86% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 87% of capacity at Morrow Point and 57% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 72% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of May 16th, April observed inflow into Lake Powell was 0.73 MAF (81% of normal) and the May inflow forecast is 1.50 MAF (72% of normal). The forecasted inflow into Lake Powell for WY-2024 is 7.79 MAF (81% of normal). The forecasted April through July 2024 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell was 5.1 MAF (80% of normal). The precipitation to date is 100% of normal and the current Basin snowpack is 140% of normal.

2024 & 2025 Annual Operating Plans

On June 4th, 2024, Reclamation distributed the post-final consultation draft of the 2024 Annual Operating Plan and indicated that it was being vetted by leadership within Reclamation and the Department of the Interior and was expected to be finalized and signed soon. The 2024 AOP was finalized late this year to accommodate the addition of language reflecting the recent issuance of the May 6th Record of Decision for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the 2007 Interim Shortage Guidelines and the recent execution of Minute No. 330 to the 1944 U.S./Mexico Water Treaty.

The 2024 AOP indicates that the ROD for the SEIS provides additional flexibility to Reclamation to protect Lake Powell's elevation from declining below 3,500 feet and allows for annual releases

from Glen Canyon Dam to be reduced as low as 6.0 MAF. Additionally, the ROD requires implementation of the Lower Colorado River Reservoir Protection Conservation Program, with the Lower Basin States creating an additional 3.0 MAF of conserved water supplies for storage in Lake Mead between 2023-2026 in addition to water use reduction obligations required in the 2007 Interim Shortage Guidelines (ISG) and 2019 Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan Agreement (LB DCP).

The post-final 2024 AOP also indicates that Lake Powell will be operated in the Mid-Elevation Release Tier with a 7.48 MAF release from Glen Canyon Dam to the Lower Basin and Mexico. The Shortage Condition will be the criterion governing Lake Mead operations with water use reduction obligations pursuant to the ISG and LB DCP. The delivery to Mexico will be 1.450 MAF with adjustments pursuant to Minutes Nos. 323 and 330 to the 1944 U.S./Mexico Water Treaty.

The 2025 AOP process kicks off on June 11th with the first consultation webinar. Based upon the May 24 Month Study Report, the projections for the 2025 AOP are that Lake Powell will be operated in the Mid-Elevation Release Tier, and the release from Glen Canyon Dam will be 7.48 MAF. Lake Mead is projected to operate in a Tier 1 Shortage Condition with water use reduction obligations pursuant to both the ISG and LB DCP. The delivery to Mexico is projected to be 1.383 MAF with additional activities pursuant to both Minutes Nos. 323 and 330.

Updated Lower Basin Consumptive Uses & Losses Reports

On June 7th, Reclamation released updated consumptive uses and losses (CU&L) reports for the Lower Colorado River Basin for the period 1971-2015. Preparation of these five-year reports is a requirement of Section 601 of the 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act (P.L. 90-537) that the Secretary of the Department of the Interior “make reports as to the annual consumptive uses and losses of water from the Colorado River system . . . including a detailed breakdown of the beneficial consumptive use of water on a state-by-state basis.”

The rationale for Reclamation’s revisions and updates to the earlier Lower Basin CU&L reports stems from a commitment made during the 2012 Basin Study process to resolve and correct methodological and data inconsistencies in Reclamation’s reports pertaining to Lower Basin tributaries, in collaboration with the Basin States. The recalculated CU&L data are reported as either mainstream or tributary water uses, and then combined for total annual Lower Basin System water uses. The tributary uses data are reported by state, reporting area (subbasin), and water use category. In addition to mainstream and tributary CU&L data, the report includes data on water delivered annually to Mexico and other water flowing to Mexico, estimated Lower Basin population data, and tributary area irrigated acreage.

The updated Lower Basin CU&L reports can be accessed on the Reclamation's Lower Colorado Basin webpage at <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/wtracct.html>. There is also access to a Power BI data visualization tool that allows users to review graphics describing much of the information in the updated reports.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES

Post-2026 Process Update

On May 29th, the Lower Basin States met in Las Vegas, Nevada, to continue discussions associated with refining and completing core elements of the proposed Lower Basin Post-2026 Colorado River Operational Guidelines alternative that was submitted to Reclamation for modeling and impacts assessment evaluation on March 6th. In conjunction with continuing to hold discussions with representatives of the Upper Division States, the Lower Basin States believe it is important to continue to explore options for Compact-compliant Lake Powell and Glen Canyon Dam operations, more fully describe the proposed new water conservation, storage, and recovery program for Lake Mead, and how to effectively account for and/or transition conserved water supplies from the existing Intentionally Created Surplus and LB DCP programs into a new Post-2026 program. The Lower Basin's technical work group will continue to meet over the summer to address these and other tasks. Finally, the Lower Basin State Principals are expected to periodically meet with their Upper Basin counterparts in seeking a path toward development of a consensus-based Post-2026 operational paradigm.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

The Board submitted testimony to six Congressional sub-committees in support of continued funding for Colorado River Basin salinity control programs. The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Salinity Control Forum) and Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council (Advisory Council) have identified a need of at least \$10.7 million for the Reclamation's Basinwide Program, \$11.3 million for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and \$2.0 million for the Bureau of Land Management's Aquatic Resources Program.

The Salinity Control Forum held hybrid meetings on June 5-6 and the Advisory Council (Advisory Council) met on June 5 in Durango, Colorado. Prior to the Salinity Control Forum and Advisory Council meetings the Salinity Control Forum Work Group held a similarly hybrid meeting on June

3-4 at the same location. During these meetings, the Salinity Control Forum and Advisory Council received updates on and discussed a range of salinity programs and topics from federal and other agencies. Major updates are as follows.

The Salinity Control Forum received an update on the operation of the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU). The PVU brine injection well is currently operating at reduced capacity. Seismicity near the PVU injection well appears to be increasing in response to the last two years of resumed injection at the site. Reclamation is monitoring the site and plans to continue operating the well unless the risk of seismic activity increases.

The Salinity Control Forum received a report that discussions are occurring regarding the potential creation of a Dolores Canyon National Monument. The PVU lies within the proposed National Monument boundaries. The Salinity Control Forum will monitor these efforts and consider potential outreach to Congressional representatives to ensure the continued long-term viability of salinity control in the Paradox Valley.

The Advisory Council heard recommendations from the Advisory Council's Technical Advisory Group (TAG) about which of several proposed research projects to fund under the U.S. Geological Survey's Scientific Investigations Reports (SIR) program. The Advisory Council recommended funding four projects: a characterization of salinity loading and efficacy of salinity control in the Upper Colorado River Basin; a reconnaissance-level assessment of groundwater recharge, circulation and mass loading in the Paradox Valley; an investigation of salinity mass loading to the Colorado River near Spanish Valley and Castle Valley, Utah; and a study on reservoir salinity dynamics in the Western U.S.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Reclamation released a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Final SEIS) for the Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) in the Federal Register on Friday, May 31st, 2024. The supplement is to the December 2016 LTEMP Final Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision. The Final SEIS considers modifications to two aspects of the LTEMP: (1) incorporation of experimental flows to disrupt the spawning of smallmouth bass and (2) updates to the protocol for high-flow experiments (HFEs), including adjustments to the sediment accounting periods and implementation windows. Within the Final SEIS, Reclamation identified the Cool Mix Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.

The Final SEIS is available on Reclamation's website:

<https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/amp/index.html>. A 30-day public review period is now in

progress. Any modifications to LTEMP based on the Final SEIS will occur in a pending Record of Decision.

The Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) held a virtual meeting on May 15th. Reclamation reported that it is continuing to prepare for maintenance of the bypass tubes at Glen Canyon Dam. Scheduling of the maintenance will be coordinated with any experimental releases from the dam that may be performed as part of the Long Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP).

The U.S. Geological Survey's Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC) and the National Park Service (NPS) provided updates on ongoing monitoring of smallmouth bass and other non-native fish species. Three hundred sixty-eight smallmouth bass were captured in 2022. Twelve hundred seventy-three smallmouth bass were captured in 2023. Thus far, seventeen smallmouth bass have been captured during 2024. More capture of smallmouth bass is anticipated during the summer months.

The NPS reported that it will be preparing an Environmental Assessment to consider potential modification of the slough located at river mile -12. The warmer, stiller waters of the slough relative to the mainstem of the Colorado River provide favorable habitat for the breeding of invasive non-native warmwater fish. Modification of the slough is being considered to reduce the likelihood of invasive non-native warmwater fish, particularly smallmouth bass, from successfully nesting at the site in an effort to prevent establishment of fish populations that may threaten the humpback chub, a federally listed species under the Endangered Species Act.

GCMRC reported that temperatures in the 12-mile slough were approaching levels considered suitable for the breeding of smallmouth bass. The NPS is planning for potential electrofishing and, if necessary, chemical treatment intended to deter smallmouth bass population establishment during the summer. The NPS reported that it also intends to place a newly purchased net at the mouth of the 12-mile slough to prevent fish passage.

The GCDAMP is developing a new Triennial Work Plan. The Triennial Work Plan guides the activities of both GCMRC and Reclamation's efforts as part of the GCDAMP. It is anticipated that AMWG will consider recommending a Triennial Work Plan, including a budget, to the Secretary of the Interior during its August meeting.

A Navajo representative provided a report from a recent river trip. During the river trip, 46 bighorn sheep were identified. Approximately half of the sheep seen were lambs, including

several sets of twins. The Navajo view this as an indication that the bighorn sheep population is thriving in the Grand Canyon.

The Technical Work Group (TWG) is scheduled to meet July 9th – 10th in Flagstaff, AZ. The AMWG is scheduled to hold a hybrid meeting August 21st – 22nd in Grand Canyon National Park.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Washington, D.C. Report

Energy and Water Appropriations Schedule

The House Appropriations Committee is planning to markup the Energy and Water bill in the Subcommittee on June 28th and in the full Committee on July 9th. The Senate Appropriations Committee has not yet released their markup schedule.

The House has already begun marking up two of the 12 appropriations bills as they try to pass them out of committee before August recess. We are anticipating another continuing resolution that would likely fund the government through the election on November 5th, with an omnibus or minibus in the lame duck session.

BOR Staffing

The Bureau of Reclamation announced a new head of its dam safety program, promoting a 25-year veteran of the agency to helm oversight of its infrastructure. Miguel Rocha is the new director of the Dam Safety and Infrastructure Office, which includes both Reclamation's dam safety program and its asset management program.

Senate Budget Hearing on Drought

On May 22nd, the Senate Budget Committee held a hearing on “Droughts, Dollars, and Decisions: Water Scarcity in a Changing Climate.” Notably, Metropolitan Water District’s General Manager and CEO, Adel Hagekhalil, highlighted the significant costs of drought in California and the projects necessary to improve climate resilience and address reliability needs.

Witnesses and experts discussed the impacts of droughts on water resources, agriculture, and communities, highlighting the need for effective management strategies and investments. Topics

included the economic ramifications of water scarcity, challenges faced by water users, and potential solutions to mitigate future crises.

Funding Announcement

The Department of the Interior recently announced \$700 million from the Inflation Reduction Act for long term water conservation efforts across the Lower Colorado River Basin. The funding could help conserve more than 700,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead through projects like water distribution structures, advanced metering infrastructure, farm efficiency improvements, canal lining, turf removal, groundwater banking, desalination, recycling water and water purification.

Water Legislation

On May 22nd, the House Natural Resources Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee held a hearing to discuss four bills, including Rep. John Curtis' (R-UT) Colorado River Salinity Control Fix Act (H.R. 7872). Don Barnett, the Executive Director of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum, testified in support of the legislation. The bill currently has 9 cosponsors.

The proposed legislation includes provisions to raise the federal cost-share for initiatives aimed at desalinating the Colorado River. David Palumbo, Reclamation's deputy commissioner of operations, expressed the Bureau's support for the bill's objective to tackle the existing funding deficit for the salinity control program, emphasizing the adverse effects of high river salinity on agricultural lands and water consumers.

The hearing also included the [Help Hoover Dam Act \(H.R. 7776 and S. 4016\)](#), which was introduced by Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV). The bill would allow the Bureau of Reclamation to access \$45 million in unused funds for Hoover Dam operations, maintenance and improvement projects. The \$45 million in the Colorado River Dam fund has been inaccessible for decades and the legislation would allow for investments in the Hoover Dam, making sure that operations and maintenance continue.

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