



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

December 4, 2024

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT

As of December 2nd, the water surface elevation of Lake Powell was 3,575.15 feet with nearly 8.91 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 38% of capacity. The water surface elevation of Lake Mead was 1,060.93 feet with 8.48 MAF of storage, or 33% of capacity. As of December 1st, the total System storage was 24.61 MAF, or 42% of capacity, which is about 289 kilo-acre feet (KAF) less than the total System storage at this time last year.

As of November 24th, storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, included the following volumes: 60% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 86% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 94% of capacity at Morrow Point; 63% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 65% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of November 18th, October observed inflow into Lake Powell was 0.29 MAF (64% of normal) and the November inflow forecast is 0.38 MAF (91% of normal). The forecasted inflow into Lake Powell for WY-2025 is 8.62 MAF (90% of normal). The forecasted April through July 2025 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell was 5.80 MAF (91% of normal). As of December 2nd, the precipitation to date is 109% normal and the current Basin snowpack is 116%.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES

Post-2026 Alternatives Matrix

On November 20th, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) shared a list of draft alternatives for consideration as part of the Post-2026 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Earlier this year, Reclamation received a number of proposed stakeholder alternatives for the EIS, including separate alternatives from the Upper and Lower Basin States. After reviewing those proposals, Reclamation developed four different action alternatives, in addition to the No Action alternative, that could be analyzed in the forthcoming draft EIS. Reclamation has not proposed carrying forward either the Upper or Lower Basin alternative. The alternatives include:

1. *No Action Alternative*: The No Action would revert to annual determinations through the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) process. Lake Powell releases would be 8.23 unless a higher release is required for equalization or unless limited by Glen Canyon Dam infrastructure. Lower Basin shortages of up to 0.600 MAF/yr would be allocated by the priority system.
2. *Federal Authorities*: This alternative would require Lower Basin shortages of up to 3.5 MAF/yr, administered by the priority system. No reductions in the Upper Basin are included. Lake Powell releases would be as much as 9.5 MAF, declining to less than 5.0 MAF as needed, with the goal of protecting Lake Powell elevations.
3. *Federal Authorities Hybrid*: This alternative would require Lower Basin shortages of between 1.5 - 3.5 MAF/yr, distributed pro rata. Upper Basin conservation, of an unspecified volume and timing, is mentioned. Lake Powell releases would be based on a number of factors and no release range is explicitly identified.
4. *Cooperative Conservation*: This alternative would require Lower Basin shortages of up to 4.0 MAF, triggered by recent hydrology and seven-reservoir storage. Voluntary water contributions would occur in both basins. Lake Powell releases would range from 5.0 - 11.0 MAF.
5. *Basin Hybrid*: This alternative would require Lower Basin shortages of up to 2.1 MAF/yr, triggered by seven-reservoir storage. The allocation of Lower Basin shortages would be analyzed in a number of permutations: pro rata, priority system, and with and without Tribal reductions. Upper Basin conservation, of an unspecified volume and timing, is mentioned. Lake Powell releases would range from 5.0 - 12.0 MAF.

Reclamation intends to release a NEPA Alternatives Report on their proposed alternatives within the next month.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

On November 18th, Reclamation issued a letter concluding the cool mix flow experiment that was initiated on July 9th. Reclamation based the decision to conclude the experiment on penstock release temperatures falling below 15.5°C (60°F), and on current weather forecasts which anticipated that river temperatures would remain below 15.5°C (60°F) for the remainder of the winter. A copy of this letter is included in the Board packet.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Washington, D.C. Report

Potential Lands and Water Package

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee marked up 79 bills last week in advance of a potential lands and water package coming together by the end of this year. Notable legislation pertaining to the Colorado River that passed out of committee includes:

- [S. 4016](#) - The Help Hoover Dam Act sponsored by Sen. Sinema (I-AZ) would give Reclamation the authority to use “stranded funds” currently in the Colorado River Dam Fund to pay for operation, maintenance, and replacement projects at Hoover Dam.
- [S. 4576](#) - The Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act sponsored by Sen. Hickenlooper (D-CO) would extend the System Conservation Pilot Program through 2026 as the Colorado River Basin states, Reclamation, and stakeholders continue discussions on potential long-term water management once operational rules expire in 2026.
- [S. 5000](#) - The bill sponsored by Sen. Lee (R-UT) would create a memorandum of understanding to address the impacts of a the “Supplement to the 2016 Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan Record of Decision” on the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund.
- [S. 5012](#) - The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program Amendment Act sponsored by Sen. Padilla (D-CA) would ensure that state contributions to conservation projects in the Lower Colorado River Basin are able to earn interest and grow before being allocated.

House Natural Resources Committee Hearing

On November 20th, the House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries held a hearing on several water bills including, H.R. 9515, the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program Amendment Act of 2024. Jessica Neuwerth testified in support of the legislation and explained that the legislation would ensure state contributions for the program are able to earn interest. Several representatives also expressed their support for the legislation.

Political Appointees

President-elect Trump nominated North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum to serve as Secretary of the Interior and chairman of the newly formed National Energy Council. As Interior Secretary, Burgum will have oversight of the Bureau of Reclamation.

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