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Colorado River Water Users in California Add 1.2 Million Acre-Feet to Lake Mead in 2 years, Enough Water to Raise Lake Mead by 16 Feet
Actions Support Commitment to Protect Colorado River System

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – Colorado River water users in California have together voluntarily conserved more than 1.2 million acre-feet of water in just two years, adding the water to Lake Mead to help stabilize the reservoir during historic drought conditions, according to figures released today.

The achievements, reported during a meeting of the Colorado River Board of California during this year's Colorado River Water Users Association's conference, result from the implementation of a series of conservation agreements in 2023 and 2024, along with agencies storing conserved water in Lake Mead. The agreements involve the Bard Water District, Coachella Valley Water District, Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe, Imperial Irrigation District, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Palo Verde Irrigation District, San Diego County Water Authority, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

California agencies committed in late 2022 to contribute a total of 1.6 million acre-feet of water to Lake Mead by the end of 2026. After just two years, the state has already reached 75 percent of its commitment – with 500,000 acre-feet of water conserved in 2024 and 700,000 acre-feet saved in 2023, resulting in the equivalent of 16 feet of water being added to Lake Mead. California agencies and tribes have programs in place to exceed the remaining 400,000 acre-feet of promised conservation by the end of 2026.

These efforts have not only improved levels in Lake Mead, but through coordinated operations, they have benefitted the Upper Basin by reducing required Lake Powell releases. They have provided much-needed stability to the entire system as the seven Basin states work with the federal government and Basin tribes to create a post-2026 operations plan for the river.

Reclamation has supported these conservation efforts through the Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program, funded from a portion of the \$4 billion for western drought relief in the Inflation Reduction Act. Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton joined state agency leaders in Las Vegas today to acknowledge their accomplishments during the annual Colorado River Water Users Association conference.

"In two years, Californians have plunged our uses to their lowest levels since the 1940s, all while supporting half the Basin's entire population and a plurality of the Basin's farm production," said JB Hamby, chairman of the Colorado River Board of California and Colorado River Commissioner for California. "Every user, sector, state, and Basin must do their part to protect this river. No one has shown that more than California's cities, farms, and tribes."



The water savings over the past two years were produced through on-farm conservation programs, temporary and seasonal land-fallowing programs, curtailment of replenishment water for groundwater basins, turf replacement programs, and urban water efficiency efforts.

“California will continue to relentlessly protect the Colorado River through conservation and collaboration. Actions speak louder than words, and we are proud to lead by example on the river,” Hamby continued.

The 1.2 million acre-feet saved by California over the past two years builds on decades of work by water users in the state to cut their use of Colorado River water. Urban and agricultural water users have successfully lowered their annual use by 800,000 acre-feet since 2002, through investments in water efficient farming practices, seasonal fallowing and deficit irrigation programs, canal lining, turf replacement programs in cities, and other conservation programs. These efforts have significantly reduced California’s draw on the Colorado River, which have helped stabilize Lake Mead’s level and move us a step closer towards a sustainable Colorado River system.

The Colorado River Basin is the most important water source in the West, providing water for more than 40 million people and generating hydropower in seven U.S. states. It is a crucial resource for 30 Tribal Nations and two states in Mexico, while supporting 5.5 million acres of agriculture, along with important ecosystems and endangered species. During the last 25 years, the flow in the Colorado River has been 20% lower than during the 20th century.

“IID continues to prioritize the need for conservation and collaboration to protect the Colorado River and manage a resource that is our community’s only water supply. We are very appreciative of the support and voluntary participation in the district’s conservation programs by IID growers, who already have set the bar for efficiency-based farming. In support of the Lower Basin Drought Plan, over the last two years IID has left approximately 350,000 acre-feet of conserved water in Lake Mead, adding nearly five feet of elevation. At year-end, IID’s 2024 conservation programs are anticipated to create more than 660,000 acre-feet of conservation, with this annual savings expected to increase even further over the next two years to add another six feet of elevation to Lake Mead.”

**Jamie Asbury, General Manager
Imperial Irrigation District**



“The amount of water California has conserved over the past two years showcases the remarkable power of collective action and our commitment to acting quickly to protect Lake Mead. It is a testament of what we can achieve across the Colorado River Basin when we each take responsibility and work together for the greater good.”

**Deven Upadhyay, Interim General Manager
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**

“Our collective achievements not only have made a profound impact on Lake Mead today, they also illustrate the can-do spirit that the Water Authority and our partners bring to future conservation work on the river. We are both proud of what we have accomplished and committed to delivering additional solutions for the Southwest in the years ahead.”

**CRB Vice Chair Jim Madaffer
San Diego County Water Authority**

“As stewards of the Colorado River, the Quechan Tribe has a sacred responsibility to ourselves, our people, our neighbors, and future generations to ensure a sustainable and living Colorado River ecosystem. We have relied on the River from time immemorial and care for it as it has cared for us. We are proud to participate with our partners in California and at the Bureau of Reclamation in contributing to these important efforts to sustain the river that gave us life.”

**President Jordan Joaquin
Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribal Council**

“The Coachella Valley Water District is proud in continuing to be a part of the solution on the Colorado River. We stand with our California sister agencies in this effort, and to date have contributed over 71,000 acre-ft to the system through our two conservation programs. CVWD acknowledges that there is much work remaining to ensure long-term stability in the system, and are committed to working with our partners on finding solutions to protect the Colorado River Basin.”

**Jim Barrett, General Manager
Coachella Valley Water District**

“In these times of increasing hydrological unpredictability, Los Angeles recognizes the importance of preserving Colorado River Basin and Lake Mead. The City of Los Angeles contribution towards the impressive amount of voluntary conservation shared by all California Colorado River water users is part of many responsible water resource management strategies the City is currently pursuing. Over the past 30 years, Angelenos have cut water usage by 44%, even as the City’s population has increased by over one million people. We will continue to prioritize conservation in addition to the expansion of



recycled water and local water supply development to help preserve California's vital shared water resources from the Colorado River."

**Anselmo Collins, Senior Assistant General Manager
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power**

"In 2024, Bard Water District continued its seasonal fallowing program in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. The seasonal fallowing program not only contributes water savings to help maintain Colorado River system levels but also allows the Bard Water District to fund improvements to its district's irrigation system and replace aging infrastructure. The improvements and replacements will further increase efficiencies and contribute to additional water savings. The Bard Water District looks forward to continuing its work with our lower basin partners to preserve the Colorado River system and farming in the Bard Valley."

**Ray Face, President
Bard Water District**

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For nearly 90 years, the Colorado River Board of California's mission has been to protect the interests and rights of the State of California, its agencies and citizens, in the water and power resources of the Colorado River system. The Colorado River Board represents the State of California and its members in discussions and negotiations with the Colorado River Basin States, federal, state, local governmental agencies, and Mexico regarding the management of the Colorado River.