

Development of Lower Basin Shortage Guidelines and Coordinated Management Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead Under Low Reservoir Conditions

Project Background

In May 2005, the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) directed the Bureau of Reclamation to develop additional Colorado River management strategies to address Lower Basin shortage and operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead under low reservoir conditions. To this end, Reclamation has initiated a public process to develop and adopt water supply guidelines that can be used when water shortage conditions exist. The proposed action is the development and adoption of these strategies and guidelines.

This project fact sheet provides information and background on the proposed action to adopt specific Colorado River shortage guidelines and management strategies to address operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead under low reservoir conditions.

It also provides a general overview of the environmental review process and outlines future opportunities for public input.

Many valuable comments were received. The issues raised will be analyzed as part of the Draft EIS due out in December 2006. A comprehensive scoping report, including every comment in full, will be available to the public in March 2006. Following release of the scoping report,

Reclamation will develop and release draft alternatives (i.e. possible actions to meet the project objective).

Public Participation

Opportunities for public comment will occur throughout the entire EIS process. Once the Draft EIS for this project is released, Reclamation will hold another series of meetings to provide the public an opportunity to review the draft environmental document and make formal comments. Public comments will then be addressed in the Final

EIS. The Final EIS is expected to be complete by fall 2007 with the Secretary issuing a Record of Decision by December 2007. Documents will be available by mail, online, and at various local agencies and libraries.

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Environmental Review Process

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Reclamation is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the *Development of Lower Basin Shortage Guidelines and Coordinated Management Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead Under Low Reservoir Conditions*. In November 2005, Reclamation held four public scoping meetings in the Colorado River Basin (Salt Lake City, UT, Denver, CO, Phoenix, AZ, and Henderson, NV) to introduce the project and solicit public comments on the scope.

Project Schedule



Reclamation is committed to fully informing and engaging stakeholders and interested parties throughout the development of this project. Individuals or organizations that would like to be included on the project mailing list, have questions or concerns, or are interested in receiving additional information are encouraged to contact one of the project representatives (see For Further Information).

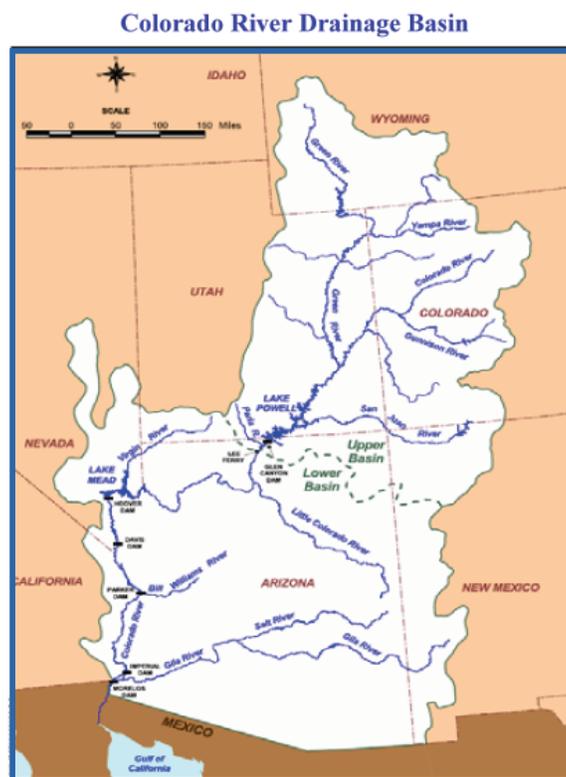
Project Need

The Colorado River is of great importance to the Southwestern United States for water supply, hydropower production, flood control, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and other benefits. Each year, the Secretary is required to declare the Colorado River water supply availability conditions for the Lower Division States in terms of normal, surplus, or shortage. While regulations and operations criteria have been adopted for normal and surplus conditions, detailed guidelines for a water supply shortage have never been established. Recent years of drought, decreasing system storage and increasing demands for Colorado River water have increased the need to develop guidelines for how Reclamation, the seven Basin States, and other stakeholders would address limited available water supplies during times of low reservoir conditions. By developing additional management strategies, the Secretary would have a mechanism to determine the circumstances under which a shortage in the Lower Basin should be declared. This would allow Lower Basin Colorado River users, who currently have no indicators for when

supplies may be reduced, the ability to plan for periods of less than full water deliveries. Additional operational tools may also facilitate conservation of reservoir storage, thereby minimizing the adverse effects of long-term drought and low-reservoir conditions in the Colorado River Basin.

Project Setting

The Colorado River Basin encompasses some 242,000 square miles of land within the states of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California. The Colorado River is approximately 1,450 miles long and extends from the western slope of the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of California. The major tributaries of the Colorado River include the Bill Williams, Dolores, Gila, Green, Gunnison, Duchesne, Yampa, Little Colorado, San Juan, and Virgin Rivers. The major reservoirs include Flaming Gorge, Blue Mesa, Navajo, Lake Powell, Lake Mead, and Lake Havasu with a combined storage capacity of 60 million acre-feet. The combined storage capacity of lakes Powell and Mead comprise approximately 80 percent of the total system storage.



For Further Information

Please contact Terrance J. Fulp, Ph.D., at (702) 293-8500 or e-mail at strategies@lc.usbr.gov; and/or Randall Peterson at (801) 524-3633 or e-mail at strategies@uc.usbr.gov. You can also visit the project web site at: www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/strategies.