

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

Alternatives Developed and Available For Review

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), acting at the direction of and on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), has developed a range of draft alternatives for consideration in the development of Lower Colorado River Basin shortage guidelines and coordinated reservoir management strategies to address operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, particularly under low reservoir conditions. A description of the draft alternatives is available for review on the project web site located at www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/strategies.html or by contacting a project representative (see *For Further Information*).

The draft alternatives were crafted to reflect, among others, three important considerations that were identified by commentors during the scoping process:

- Importance of Encouraging Conservation of Water: Many comments focused on the importance of encouraging and utilizing water conservation as an important tool to better

manage limited water supplies and therefore minimize the likelihood and severity of potential future shortages.

- Importance of Consideration of Reservoir Operations at all Operational Levels: Many comments emphasized the importance of management and operational guidelines for the full range of operational levels at Lake Powell and Lake Mead.
- Term of Operational Guidelines: Many comments noted the advantages of interim, rather than permanent, additional operational guidelines.

The draft alternatives were developed in close coordination with interested stakeholders, cooperating agencies, tribes, and other interested parties and represent a broad range of the possible alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed action. The project team will now be conducting more detailed modeling and analyses of the effects of each draft alternative. The results of the modeling and analyses will be documented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is anticipated for release in December 2006.



Project Schedule



Project Background

In May 2005, the Secretary directed Reclamation to develop additional Colorado River management strategies to address Lower Basin shortage guidelines and operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead under low reservoir conditions. To that end, Reclamation initiated a public process to develop and adopt water supply guidelines that can be used when water shortage conditions exist.

On September 30, 2005, Reclamation published a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and described the proposed action as having two elements: 1) adoption of specific (interim) Lower Basin Shortage Guidelines, and 2) coordinated reservoir management strategies to address operations of Lakes Mead and Powell 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 project scope. While many of the comments received related to operations during drought and low reservoir conditions, other comments expressed a need to consider other water supply, water management, and operational strategies or programs that could improve the availability and reliability of Colorado River water supplies. After thorough consideration of these issues and comments, the Department of the Interior anticipates that the elements of the proposed action will include:

1. Shortage strategy for Lake Mead and the Lower Division states
2. Coordinated operation of Lakes Powell and Mead
3. Mechanism for the storage and delivery of system and non-system water in Lake Mead
4. Proposed modification/extension of the existing Interim Surplus Guidelines

Each of the draft alternatives includes some expression of the four elements noted above.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed action is to adopt additional operational strategies to improve the Department of the Interior's annual management and operation of key Colorado River reservoirs while also providing mainstream users of Colorado River water, particularly those in the Lower Division states of Arizona, California, and Nevada, a greater degree of predictability with respect to the amount of annual water deliveries in future years, particularly under low reservoir conditions. The EIS process will provide an opportunity to consider the trade-offs between the frequency and magnitude of shortages and the benefits of water storage in Lakes Powell and Mead, including water storage, power production, recreation, and environmental benefits.

Public Participation

Opportunities for public comment will occur throughout the entire EIS process. Once the Draft EIS for this project is issued, 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 September 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.

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 below.

For Further Information

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