

— Project Fact Sheet —

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

Project Overview

In May 2005, the Secretary of the Interior 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.

Project Need

The Colorado River is of great importance to the Southwestern United States for water supply, hydropower production, 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 will have a mechanism to determine the

circumstances under which a shortage in the Lower Basin should be declared. This will 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.

Colorado River Drainage 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 combined storage capacity of 60 million acre-feet (MAF). The combined storage capacity of lakes Powell and Mead comprise approximately 80 percent of the total system storage.

Colorado River Water Supply

Management of the river is governed by the Law of the River, which consists of applicable statutes, interstate compacts, regulations, court decisions, court decrees, international treaty and tribal water rights that apportion and regulate the use and management of Colorado River water among the seven basin states and Mexico. Under the Law of the River, the basin is divided into the Upper Basin (comprising Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) and the Lower Basin (Nevada, Arizona, and California). Each basin has a perpetual allocation to Colorado River water under the 1922 Colorado River Compact, an agreement reached by the basin states and approved by Congress. The 1944 Treaty with the Republic of Mexico also apportioned an annual 1.5 MAF to Mexico. An estimated population of 25 million is served by the Colorado River.





Environmental Review Initiated

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Reclamation is conducting public scoping meetings and 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*. Alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS have not been developed at this time and will be developed through the NEPA process, including through the EIS scoping meetings.

Public Participation

Reclamation is implementing a comprehensive public participation program to fully inform and engage potentially affected agencies and communities. Understanding your views on the scope of the project and EIS is critical to a

successful project. Toward that end, a series of meetings is being held to introduce the project and solicit public comments. The meeting schedule is:

-  Tuesday, November 1, 2005 – 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Hilton Salt Lake City Center, Topaz Room
255 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah.
-  Wednesday, November 2, 2005 – 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Adam's Mark Hotel, Tower Court D
1550 Court Place, Denver, Colorado.
-  Thursday, November 3, 2005 – 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Arizona Department of Water Resources,
Third Floor, Conference Rooms A&B,
500 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona.
-  Tuesday, November 8, 2005 – 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Henderson Convention Center, Grand Ballroom,
200 South Water Street, Henderson, Nevada.

If you are unable to attend the meetings, but would like to submit a comment, please mail written comments to:

Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation,
Lower Colorado Region, Attention: BCOO-1000,
P.O. Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-
1470, faxogram at (702) 293-8156, or e-mail at
strategies@lc.usbr.gov; and/or Regional Director,
Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado Region,
Attention: UC-402, 125 South State Street, Salt
Lake City, Utah 84318-1147, faxogram at (801)
524-3858, or e-mail at strategies@uc.usbr.gov.

**Comments must be received by close of
business on Wednesday, November 30, 2005.**

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.