

Lower Colorado Region
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Reclamation Seeks Public Comment on Development of Management Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead Under Low Reservoir Conditions

The Bureau of Reclamation today filed a Federal Register Notice requesting public comment on the development of management strategies for Lakes Powell and Mead, on the Colorado River, under low reservoir conditions. Among the management strategies anticipated are shortage guidelines for the Lower Colorado River Basin.

The strategies will likely identify those circumstances under which the Department of the Interior would reduce annual Colorado River water deliveries and the manner in which annual operations of the Colorado River reservoirs would be modified under low reservoir conditions.

The Department expects the strategies to provide guidance to the Secretary's Annual Operating Plan decisions, and provide more predictability to water users throughout the Basin, particularly the Lower Basin states of Arizona, California, and Nevada.

The Annual Operating Plan - developed in consultation with the Basin States, water and power users, Tribes, environmental and recreational groups and other interested parties - guides operation of the Colorado River. Among other elements, it specifies whether the amount of Colorado River water available to be released from Lake Mead to Lower Basin users in a given year will be "normal" (7.5 million acre-feet), "surplus" (more than 7.5 million acre-feet) or "shortage" (less than 7.5 million acre-feet).

Interim Surplus Guidelines were adopted in 2001 for use in making annual determinations regarding "normal" and "surplus" conditions. Those guidelines allow the Department and entities in Arizona, California, and Nevada to have greater predictability in identifying when more than 7.5 maf of Colorado River water will be available for use within these three states.

Adoption of detailed guidelines for making "shortage" determinations would enable water users in the three states to identify reservoir conditions under which less than

7.5 maf would be available for use on an annual basis, as well as the amount of any potential future annual reductions in water deliveries. This would allow these users to better plan for periods of less than full water deliveries. Additional operational tools may also facilitate conservation of reservoir storage, minimizing the adverse effects of long-term drought or low-reservoir conditions in the Colorado River Basin.

Reclamation will use a public process to develop these strategies. To begin that process, Reclamation is soliciting comments from all interested parties on the content, format, mechanism and analysis to be considered during their development.

There will be two public meetings to solicit comments, but individuals or entities that cannot attend the meetings may still submit comments, to the addresses and within the timeframes noted below.

The dates, times and locations of the public meetings are:

* Tuesday, July 26, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon PDT at the Henderson Convention Center Grand Ballroom, 200 South Water Street, Henderson, Nevada; and

* Thursday, July 28, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon MDT at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center Topaz Room, 255 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Oral and written comments will be accepted at these meetings.

All comments must be received by close of business (4:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight or Pacific Daylight Time) on Wednesday, August 31, 2005.

Comments can be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to:

Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Region, Attention: BCOO-1000, P.O. Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-1470, (702) 293-8156, 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, (801) 524-3858, strategies@uc.usbr.gov.

The full Federal Register Notice is available on Reclamation's Web site, at <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/docs/strategies.pdf>

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