



One Water and Adaptation Committee

Update on Basin States Discussions Regarding Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

Item 6e

April 13, 2026

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Item 6e
Update on Basin
States
Discussions
Regarding Post-
2026
Operational
Guidelines

Subject

Basin States Discussions Regarding Operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead

Purpose

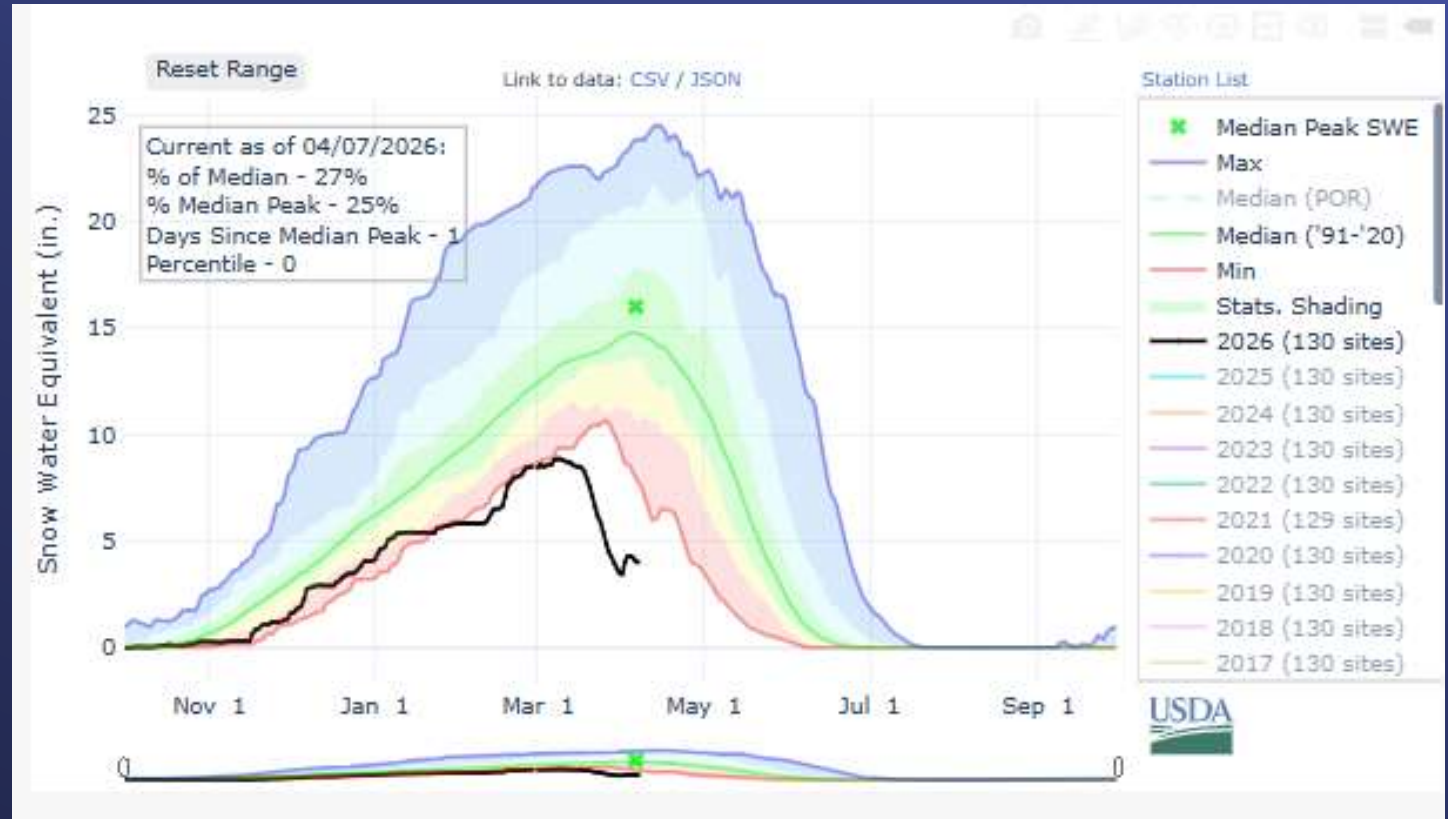
Provide updates on how current conditions affect WY 2026 operations and post-2026 negotiations

Next Steps

Continue to update the Board as Basin States discussions progress

Current Conditions in the Upper Colorado River Basin

Upper Basin
Snowpack on
Normal Peak -
Significantly Below
Driest Year on
Record



Lake Powell Forecast to Reach Elevation 3,500 ft



Lake Powell to fall to Elevation 3,500 ft - triggering infrastructure protection actions



Lake Powell Forecast to fall to lowest elevation since initial fill



Lake Powell Elevation 3,490 ft minimum power pool



Conditions since March drier than forecast – actual runoff likely to be worse



Early Runoff - March 24- Month Study forecast likely overstates end-of-year elevation

Bureau of Reclamation Actions Under 2024 SEIS

Section 6(E): Authority to Protect Glen Canyon Dam 2024 Short-Term Actions Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)

What Section 6(E) Provides

- Authorizes Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to protect Glen Canyon Dam when Lake Powell is forecast to be at or below elevation 3,500 ft
- Requires Reclamation to consider all tools that are available to avoid Lake Powell elevation declining below 3,500 ft – this includes:
 - Changes to hourly, daily, and monthly releases
 - Releases from Colorado River Storage Project Upper Initial Units (UIUs)
 - Reduced Powell releases to as low as 6.0 MAF in a water year

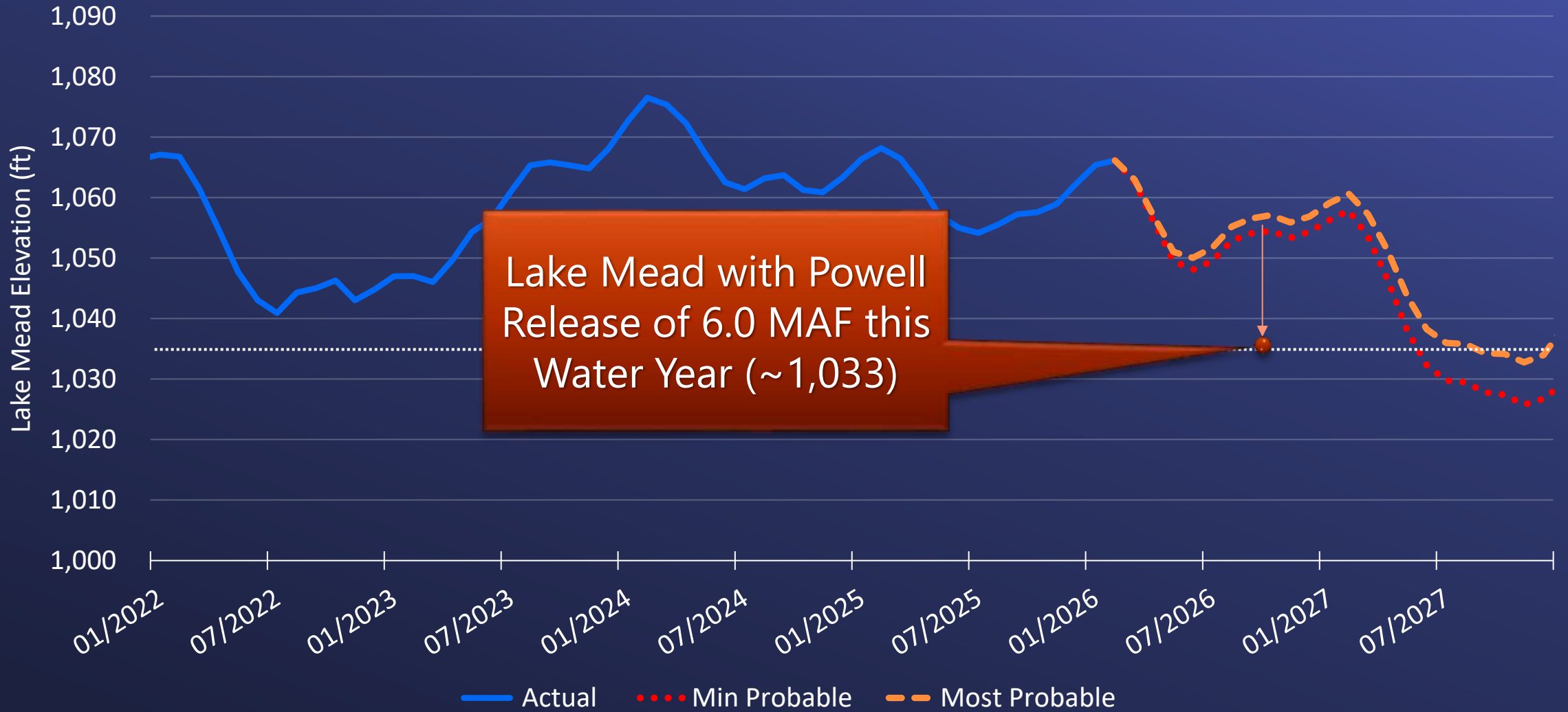
Section 6(E) Consultation

Note: Flaming Gorge release anticipated but not yet formally announced. Powell reduction subject to final Reclamation determination.

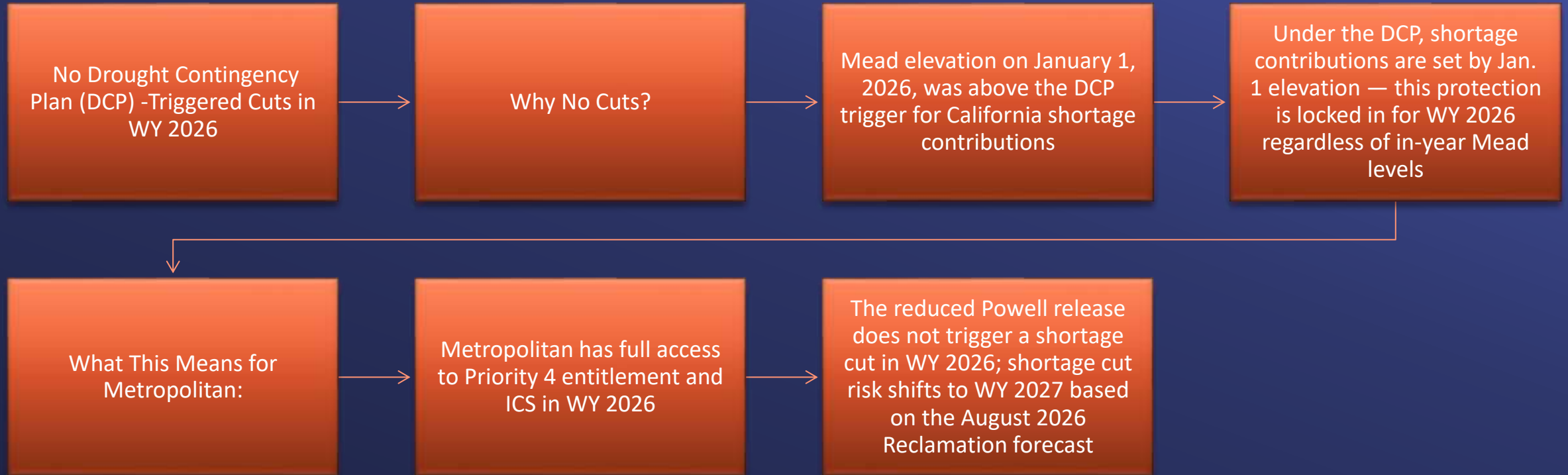
Range of Reclamation Actions

- Reclamation began Section 6(E) consultations with Basin States and contractors in October 2025
- Section 6(E) consultation is triggered when the 24-Month Study shows Lake Powell elevation declining below 3,500 ft without additional actions
- Reclamation likely to take the following actions to avoid elevation 3,500 ft:
 - Additional release from Flaming Gorge >500,000 AF
 - Reductions of Lake Powell release of 7.48 to as low as 6.0 MAF
- How to split additional UIU releases vs. reduced Powell releases likely to be the subject of discussions among Reclamation, the Lower Basin States, and the Upper Basin States over the next month

Lake Mead Could Decline Significantly if Releases from Powell are Reduced



Impacts to Metropolitan's Supply



Metropolitan Impacts

Issue	Status / Finding	Metropolitan Impact
Upper Basin Snowpack	Below WY 2002 record; peaked weeks early; runoff underway	Metropolitan staff monitoring impacts and participating in Sec. 6(E) consultation
March 24-Month Study	Powell projected to elevation 3,500 ft; conditions have worsened since	Underscores risk of deeper reductions
Flaming Gorge Release	~500,000 + AF anticipated augmentation release	Partial Mead offset — does not fully compensate for reduced Powell release
Powell Release	May be reduced from 7.48 MAF to as low as 6.0 MAF; decision by May	Drives significant Lake Mead elevation decline
DCP Shortage Cuts	No cuts in WY 2026 — Mead above DCP trigger at start of year	Full Priority 4 entitlement (550,000 AF) retained in WY 2026
ICS Access	Mead forecast to remain above elevation 1,025 ft in WY 2026	ICS withdrawals remain accessible throughout WY 2026
Hoover Power Contract	Mead may approach elevation 1,035 ft — ~70% power generation decline	Potential for less peak power to be available to Metropolitan from Hoover

DCP = Drought Contingency Plan | ICS = Intentionally Created Surplus | MAF = Million Acre-Feet | WY = Water Year (Oct 1 – Sep 30)

Looking Ahead

Key Dates & Uncertainties

April 2026 - Reclamation Section 6(E) Decisions: Final release schedule determination; Flaming Gorge release amount also finalized — critical juncture for WY 2026 planning

August 2026 — Reclamation sets WY 2027 operations either by Post-2026 Guidelines - if adopted - or consistent with Long Range Operating Criteria

WY 2027 — High-flow years drop out of the 10-year rolling compact flow window, increasing risk near Colorado River Compact Article III(c) and (d) threshold

