



One Water and Stewardship Committee

Update on Basin States Discussions Regarding Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

Item 6c

January 13, 2024

Item 6c

Update on Basin
States Discussions
Regarding Post-2026
Operational
Guidelines

Subject

Development of the Post-2026 Guidelines for operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead

Purpose

Provide updates regarding development of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Post-2026 Guidelines and the Basin States' related efforts

Next Steps

Continue to work towards a seven-state consensus alternative for the Post-2026 operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead



Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

The Post-2026 guidelines will determine:

- Releases from Lake Powell
- Water uses/shortages in the Lower Basin
- Storage of conserved water



Post-2026 EIS Timeline

Post-2026 EIS Alternatives

Alternatives Submitted to Reclamation
Upper Division States
Lower Division States
Cooperative Conservation (NGOs)
Gila River Indian Community

Alternatives Reclamation Will Analyze
Federal Authorities
Federal Hybrid
Cooperatives Conservation
Basin Hybrid

Why Alternatives Are Required: When a federal agency proposes an action like developing the Post-2026 Guidelines, under NEPA it must consider reasonable alternatives to the proposed action.

Why the Content of Alternatives Matter: The Record of Decision may only include elements of the alternatives that have been analyzed in the EIS.

Reclamation's Alternatives



Federal Authorities – emphasizes infrastructure protection based on existing federal authorities



Federal Authorities Hybrid – would require new federal authorities and water user agreements



Cooperative Conservation – based on the alternative submitted by a group of NGOs



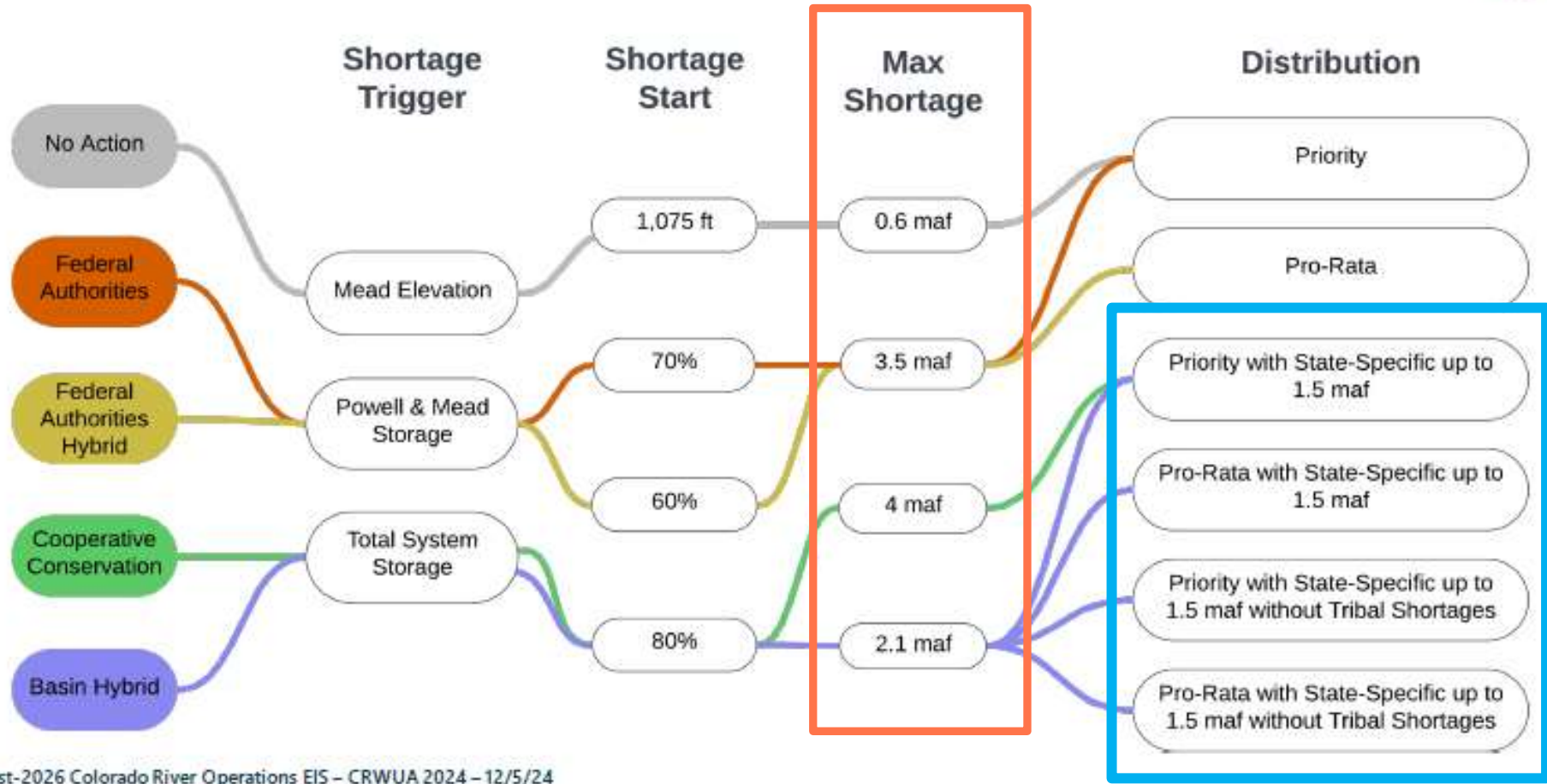
Basin Hybrid – combines elements of the Lower Division States, Upper Division States, and Gila River Indian Community's alternatives



Range of Operations in Reclamation's Alternatives Lake Powell Releases

- Volumes ranging from 4.7 – 12.0 maf
- Releases triggered by various combinations of elevations of Lake Powell, Lake Mead, Colorado River Storage Project contents and recent hydrology

Lower Basin Shortage Guidelines



13 Post-2026 Colorado River Operations EIS – CRWUA 2024 – 12/5/24

Storage & Delivery of Conserved Water

- In three of Reclamation's alternatives stored water may be used for:
 - Offsetting/managing water use reductions
 - Infrastructure protection
- The Federal Authorities Hybrid Alternative includes creation of "Federal Pools" and is Reclamation's only action alternative that permits the type of interstate transaction needed to facilitate partnerships with Southern Nevada Water Authority and Arizona & CAP



Powell Storage : 2 – 3 maf



Mead Storage: 5 – 8 maf

Upper Division States Alternative

On December 30, 2024, the Upper Division States (UDS) requested that Reclamation include the UDS Refined Alternative in Reclamation's Alternatives Report

Upper Division States Refined Alternative

- Includes larger of range of Lake Powell releases 5-12 maf
- Triggers Lower Basin reductions at higher reservoir elevations for both:
 - 1.5 maf (“Static Reduction”)
 - >1.5 – 3.9 maf
- Water conserved and stored by the Upper Division States (UDS) through voluntary “parallel activities” becomes part of the system water that can be released from Lake Powell when Lower Basin cuts exceed 1.5 maf
- The volume of conserved water that will be converted to system water will be adjusted downward to account for Upper Basin hydrologic shortages

Lower Basin Request for Compact Compliance Analysis

- Last month the Lower Basin States requested that Reclamation analyze the impacts of Compacts calls on any alternative that does not have seven state consensus
- Assumptions for purposes of Compact compliance:
 - Required deliveries pursuant to Article III of the Compact
 - Compact call by the Lower Division States
 - Upper Basin curtailment or other reductions
 - Related actions by the United States in management of federal reservoirs



Reclamation's NEPA Alternatives

Reclamation anticipates that it will issue the Post-2026 NEPA Alternatives Report on January 15

NEPA Alternatives Report

- The report will provide:
 - More detailed explanations of alternatives
 - Rationale to include elements of submitted proposals rather than carrying forward as submitted
 - Summary of anticipated analysis process for the Draft EIS
- Comments on NEPA Alternative Report
 - Lower Basin States and Contractors, as well as Upper Basin States likely to have significant comments

Next Steps

Continue to provide regular updates and seek Board direction throughout the process

