



One Water and Adaptation Committee

2/9/2026 One Water and Adaptation Committee Meeting

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Subject

Update on Basin States Discussions Regarding Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

Executive Summary

The 2007 Colorado River Interim Shortage Guidelines expire in 2026, and the Basin States have been working to try and develop a consensus plan that could serve as the basis for new guidelines starting in 2027. This report provides a quarterly update to the Committee on the status of those negotiations.

Details and Background

Background

In 2005, in response to critical drought conditions in the Colorado River Basin, then Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton urged the Colorado River Basin states (Basin States) to develop a drought plan for the Colorado River, or else the federal government will develop its own plan. In response, in 2007, the Basin States developed a plan for shortages and reservoir operations that became the basis for the 2007 Colorado River Interim Shortage Guidelines. Those Guidelines expire at the end of this current water year (September 2027). More than two years ago, Interior initiated the process to develop post-2026 Guidelines for the Colorado River.

For the last several years, the Basin States have been meeting to try and reach a consensus plan that all seven states can accept, but as of yet, significant disagreements continue, most notably between the Upper Division and Lower Division States. In recent months, some progress has been made, but several disagreements remain. The main area of disagreement is how much water use reduction should fall on each of the two basins, and how to interpret the Law of the River regarding that issue.