



General Manager

• Colorado River Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for December 2024.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

US Bureau of Reclamation Presentation on Post-2026 Alternatives

At the Colorado River Users Water Association (CRUWA) Conference in December, the US Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) presented additional details about the alternatives that Reclamation plans to analyze in the Post-2026 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for new Colorado River Guidelines. Reclamation aims to finalize operational plans by August 2026 to coordinate management of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, ensure sustainability, and adapt to varying hydrologic conditions. Reclamation identified four action alternatives for full analysis in the draft EIS. Reclamation did not list the Lower Basin Alternative among the alternatives that will be analyzed in the draft EIS. Instead, elements of the Upper Division States Alternative, Lower Basin States Alternative and Gila River Indian Community Alternative were combined into a single "Basin Hybrid Alternative."

Impacts of each of the alternatives on natural and human environments are planned to be analyzed in the draft EIS. Lake Powell releases may be limited by infrastructure constraints, and Lake Mead shortages could extend to Mexico under some scenarios. In addition to the action alternatives, Reclamation will also analyze a No Action Alternative to compare the proposed federal action to taking no action.

Alternatives Overview

No Action Alternative:

- Reverts to pre-2007 operational guidelines – 1970 Long Range Operating Criteria.
- Releases from Lake Powell set at 8.23 million acre-feet (maf) per year unless adjusted for infrastructure protection or equalization of Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

Alternative 1 - Federal Authorities:

- Focuses on Reclamation's existing statutory powers and infrastructure protection.
- Includes shortages up to 3.5 maf in the Lower Basin based on priority systems.
- Assumes reduced releases from Lake Powell and/or additional releases from Upper Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP) units to protect Lake Powell elevation 3,490, the minimum elevation where power can be reliably generated.

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Alternative 2 - Federal Authorities Hybrid:

- Includes shortages up to 3.5 maf in the Lower Basin on a pro rata basis.
- Requires new federal authorities and water user agreements.
- Adds new storage and delivery mechanisms in both Lake Powell and Lake Mead.
- Includes voluntary Upper Basin conservation of up to 200,000 AF after accounting for hydrologic shortages.
- Assumes reduced releases from Lake Powell and/or additional releases from Upper CRSP units to protect Lake Powell elevation 3,490.

Alternative 3 - Cooperative Conservation:

- Emphasizes conservation and environmental stewardship.
- Incorporates voluntary contributions and binational cooperation.
- Assumes reduced releases from Lake Powell and/or additional releases from Upper CRSP units to protect Lake Powell elevation 3,490.

Alternative 4 - Basin Hybrid:

- Makes Lake Powell releases between 5 – 12 maf per year.
- Provides for maximum Lower Basin shortages of 2.1 maf per year.
- Includes voluntary Upper Basin conservation of up to 100,000 AF after accounting for hydrologic shortages.
- Adds new storage and delivery mechanisms in both Lake Powell and Lake Mead.
- Includes both priority and pro-rata distribution of shortages that would and would not be shared by tribes.

Each alternative incorporates mechanisms for addressing Tribal water rights and emphasizes sustainability and flexibility in water management. Reclamation plans to issue the Alternatives Report in early January. National Environmental Policy Act alternative reports describe the process of evaluating and eliminating potential alternatives. The Basin States, Metropolitan, and other contractors are likely to submit comment letters on the Alternatives Report. The alternatives that Reclamation selects for full analysis will be analyzed in the draft EIS. Only operations that are analyzed in the draft EIS may be included in final EIS and Record of Decision.

Neither Metropolitan nor the state of California support any of the alternatives as currently drafted. California's goal is to continue working with the Basin States to attempt to develop an alternative for the Final EIS that is supported by all seven Basin States. This draft EIS should provide sufficient analysis of various operational paradigms that could support a new Basin States alternative, if one is developed in 2025.

Celebrations of Service at CRUWA

The Colorado River Board (CRB) honored Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Toutons' service to the Colorado River Basin over the past four year. Metropolitan, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, San Diego County Water Authority, Imperial Irrigation District, Palo Verde Irrigation District, and Coachella Valley Water District each gave gifts and made remarks about Commissioner Touton's valuable work with California during her tenure as Commissioner.

Metropolitan, Southern Nevada Water Authority, and Central Arizona Project cohosted a reception, recognizing our partnership on the River. At the reception, CRB Executive Director Chris Harris's retirement from the CRB was celebrated. Representatives from California and throughout the Lower Basin thanked Chris for his many years of tireless and impactful service on the Colorado River.