



Special Joint One Water Stewardship and Board of Directors Workshop

Basin States Discussions Regarding Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

Item 9c

November 18, 2024

Item 9c Update on Basin States Discussions Regarding Post- 2026 Operational Guidelines

Subject

Basin States discussions regarding development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines for management of Colorado River system reservoirs

Purpose

Provide update on recent discussions in the development of the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

Next Steps

Continue discussions with Federal, Basin State and California partners in development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and implementing agreements

Colorado River Reservoir Management

Reclamation's adoption of new operational guidelines constitutes a major federal action that requires an environmental analysis, in this case an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

- The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is developing the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines for management of Colorado River system reservoirs
- The guidelines determine:
 - releases from Lake Powell
 - water uses/shortages in the Lower Basin
 - storage of conserved water (like Intentionally Created Surplus)

EIS Timeline To Date



Reclamation's Preliminary Comparison of Proposed Alternatives

Preliminary modeling analyzed Proposed Alternatives Impacts in wet, dry and average conditions on:

Lake Powell elevation

- Lake Powell below 3,500 feet

Lake Mead elevation

- Lake Mead below 1,000 feet
- Lake Mead below Deadpool

Volumes of Lower Basin Reductions

Volumes of Upper Basin Reductions

Alternatives Submitted for Modeling



Lower Basin States Alternative



Upper Division States Alternative



Gila River Indian Community Alternative

Other alternatives: No Action, Continued Current Strategies, other federal alternatives



NGO Alternative

Modeling Assumptions that Affected Results



Hydrology – Reclamation used five hydrology sets that include very dry, wet and average (for the past 30 years) conditions



Reductions – Reclamation only assumed Upper Basin reductions in the Lower Division States Alternative, all other reductions are in the Lower Basin



Demands – Reclamation assumed that Upper Basin demands will increase from the current use of ~4.0 – 4.5 million acre-feet annually (maf) to 6.0 maf, while assuming steady demands in the Lower Basin and Mexico

Reclamation's Preliminary Modeling Results

Upper Division States Alternative - keeps Lake Powell higher (sometimes much higher) under all flow conditions due to lower Lake Powell releases

Lower Division States Alternative - keeps Lake Mead above 1,000 feet in nearly 90% of years, even under the driest conditions, whereas Lake Powell is below 3,500 feet in over 50% of years



Releases from Lake Powell

Shortages/water use reductions in Lower Basin

Whether the Upper Basin will take reductions in lowest system conditions

7-State Consensus Not Yet Reached

The Upper and Lower Basin States submitted separate alternatives, and while the Governors' representatives continue to meet, consensus has not yet been reached on these issues.



Post-2026 Guidelines EIS Next Steps



