



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

# Board Report

## Colorado River Resources

### • Colorado River Management Report

#### Summary

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This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for August 19 – September 23, 2025.

#### Purpose

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Informational

#### Detailed Report

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**Develop Post-2026 Guidelines and Negotiate Implementation Agreements: Provide input that shapes U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) selected alternative**

##### *Colorado River Basin States (Basin States) Meetings*

The Basin States are meeting frequently in an effort to reach consensus on an alternative for Post-2026 operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Recent discussions have focused on how Lake Powell releases will be determined in the Post-2026 Guidelines. Lake Powell releases supply both the Lower Basin and Mexico Treaty deliveries. The Interior Department and Reclamation support the Basin States' effort to reach a consensus alternative that may be incorporated into the Post-2026 Guidelines. Metropolitan staff participates in these meetings as advisors to California's principal representative in the Basin States negotiations, JB Hamby, in his role as Chair of the Colorado River Board of California.

**Develop Post-2026 Guidelines and Negotiate Implementation Agreements: Negotiate implementation agreements that protect and benefit Metropolitan's interests**

##### *Lower Basin Meetings*

California, Arizona, and Nevada are working together to reach a Lower Basin consensus regarding operational elements of Lake Mead for the Post-2026 Guidelines including Lower Basin water use reductions; storage of conserved water (like Intentionally Created Surplus), including augmentation water that may be exchanged with interstate partners; and how any surpluses would be allocated. Metropolitan staff participates in these meetings along with representatives of other Lower Basin contractors and states.

##### *California 440 Meetings*

California, Arizona, and Nevada have tentatively agreed to reduce Lower Basin water use by 1.5 million acre-feet (maf) under most system conditions to address evaporation and other system losses—often referred to as the structural deficit. The 1.5 maf of reductions includes 250,000 acre-feet (af) that is contingent on Mexico's participation at past levels. California's share of the 1.5 maf would be 440,000 af (440). The California contractors have started meeting to develop commitments to meet California's 440. Metropolitan is working with the other contractors to develop principles for sharing California's Colorado River reductions in the Post-2026 Guidelines. The agencies have agreed to develop a proposal for sharing reduction by this November. Staff will provide updates and receive board direction on the process as it moves forward.

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### **Bureau of Reclamation Consultation Regarding Lake Powell's Declining Elevation**

Reclamation has begun consultations under the 2019 Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) after its September 24-Month Study showed the risk of Lake Powell dropping to elevation 3,500 feet within the next year. In 2025, Lake Powell fell by more than 2 maf (31 feet) and Lake Mead declined by over a half maf (7.6 feet). (September 24-Month Study— [2-Year Probabilistic Projections](#)). Under the DCP, a forecast of Lake Powell below 3,500 feet triggers monthly consultations with the Upper Basin States and consideration of actions to protect Glen Canyon Dam. In the Draft 2026 Annual Operating Plan, Reclamation committed to using all available tools to prevent Lake Powell from dropping below this critical threshold for dam operations and hydropower. (The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Draft 2026 Annual Operating Plan for Lake Powell and Lake Mead—[Draft 2026 Operations Plan for Colorado River Reservoirs](#)). The most probable forecast shows Lake Powell falling below 3,525 feet in 2026, and management options could include releasing more water from upstream reservoirs and reducing releases from Powell, as was done in 2022.