



• Colorado River Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for the month of June 2022.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Department of the Interior Statements on Critical Reservoir Elevations

At the June 14 Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on Western Drought, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Commissioner Camille Touton identified the need for Colorado River Basin water users to reduce their use by two to four million acre-feet of water per year to address critical reservoir elevations at Lake Powell and Lake Mead, starting in 2023. The Commissioner said that the Department of the Interior (Interior) would be working with states, tribes, and others to reach a consensus by August 2022 about how to make these reductions. In response to questions from Senators, the Commissioner stated that the Interior has the authority to act unilaterally, if needed, and will protect the system if consensus cannot be reached.

Reclamation described the modeling they developed to show the need for additional water to address critical reservoir elevations in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, water that Reclamation is calling "Protection Volumes", at the Getches-Wilkinson Conference in Boulder, Colorado. At that conference, Assistant Secretary for Water & Science Tanya Trujillo made remarks about conditions in the Colorado River reservoirs and the need for Protection Volumes starting in 2023.

Metropolitan staff is working with its Colorado River Basin States (Basin States) partners to explore options and strategies that could meet the Interior's call for Protection Volumes by the August 2022 deadline, which would be in place starting next year. Staff will keep the Board informed as a plan is being pursued.

Reclamation Publishes Pre-Scoping Notice Seeking Public Comment for Next Set of Guidelines

Reclamation published a Federal Register notice to assist in its efforts to develop future Colorado River operating provisions. The notice seeks input on how to foster meaningful participation by all stakeholders in preparation for beginning the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to develop Colorado River operational guidelines after 2026. Reclamation is targeting early 2023 to start the NEPA process.

The notice asks for specific suggestions on the process and the substance of how best to analyze future operations and what those operations should include. The notice describes the changing circumstances in the Colorado River Basin since 2007, including declining hydrology, drought, and low-runoff conditions impacted by a warmer, changing climate and the need for continued operational alignment and partnership with Mexico. Metropolitan staff will work with the Basin States to try and develop a consensus comment letter to be provided to Reclamation for this process.

Specific documents and agreements that expire at the end of 2025 include the December 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead, among other essential management documents, including Treaty Minute 323.

To help explain the process and answer questions, Reclamation is hosting two webinars on July 12 and 14, 2022.