



## ● 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 September 2022.

### Purpose

---

Informational

### Detailed Report

---

#### Colorado River Symposium

Every few years, the Water Education Foundation hosts a symposium in Santa Fe that includes staff from key agencies working on the Colorado River. At this year's event, the Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo, and Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton spoke to the group regarding steps the Interior Department (Interior) is taking to prevent the Colorado River system's reservoirs from falling to critically low elevations that would threaten water deliveries and power production.

Interior emphasized the need for continued collaboration and partnerships across the Upper and Lower Basins, with tribes, and with the country of Mexico. Interior also described their preparation for administrative actions to ensure that the Colorado River System can sustainably deliver vital water supplies, power, and other services.

Department leaders outlined the framework under consideration for the funds as part of the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$4 billion in funding specifically for water management and conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin and other areas experiencing similar levels of drought. Metropolitan's General Manager Adel Hagekhalil also spoke about Metropolitan's participation in the urban water provider water conservation Memorandum of Understanding and the One Water approach and how these will be used to benefit the Colorado River system.

Interior described how it will establish, among other funding mechanisms, a two-step process to solicit short-term conservation contributions and longer-term durable system efficiency projects. Longer-term projects could include projects like as canal lining, re-regulating reservoirs, ornamental and non-functional turf removal, salinity projects, aquatic ecosystem restoration and impacts mitigation, crop water efficiency, rotational fallowing, and marginal land idling. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) held a listening session on September 30, 2022, to hear directly from states, tribes, water managers, farmers, irrigators and other stakeholders about implementation of this historic funding from the Inflation Reduction Act.

#### 2023 Annual Operating Plan

Reclamation held the third consultation meeting regarding its Annual Operating Plan for Colorado River reservoirs (AOP) for 2023 on September 7, 2022. Each year Reclamation prepares an AOP that reports on operations of Colorado River Reservoirs during the past year, and projects operations and releases for the current year based on current and projected reservoir elevations and hydrologic conditions throughout the basin. The AOP provides Metropolitan with significant operational information regarding projected releases from Lake Powell to Lake Mead and whether the Lower Division States (California, Arizona and Nevada) will be at normal, surplus, or shortage conditions. For 2023, a first ever shortage level 2 will be in place, which affect Arizona and Nevada, but not California. However, due to the critical conditions on the Colorado River, Reclamation has stated it may take additional actions in 2023, if needed, to protect the basin's reservoirs. Metropolitan uses information in the AOP to plan diversions, Intentionally Created Surplus creation and/or delivery, interstate banking determinations, and Drought Contingency Plan Contributions.

## Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

Ordinarily, Reclamation holds three consultations before finalizing the AOP, but due to many changing issues under consideration with operation of federal facilities on the Colorado River this year Reclamation will hold a fourth consultation on Wednesday, October 12, 2022. Metropolitan staff participates in AOP consultations.

### **Pre-Scoping for Next Set of Guidelines**

The 2007 Interim Guidelines expire on December 31, 2025. To help develop operating strategies for operation of Colorado River reservoirs post-2026, Reclamation published a Federal Register Notice on June 24, 2022 asking for public input in two specific areas:

- Suggested mechanisms for the anticipated NEPA process(es) to ensure that a wide range of Basin partners, stakeholders, and the general public can meaningfully engage and participate in the development of post-2026 operational strategies; and
- Potential substantive elements and strategies that should be considered for post-2026 operations and considered in the anticipated upcoming National Environmental Policy Act process.

The comment period ended September 1, 2022. Reclamation received 135 unique comment letters from concerned citizens, more than 1,964 submittals of the Blue Ribbon Coalition “Fill Lake Powell – the Path to 3588 ft” form letter, and 55 in-depth stakeholder letters signed by 81 unique stakeholders. Metropolitan submitted a comment letter that emphasized the importance of improving management and operations of the system under low storage and run-off conditions, allowing the opportunity for augmentation and exchange, and ensuring broad stakeholder participation in the development of the next set of guidelines.