



## ● 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 the month of March 2023.

### Purpose

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Informational

### Detailed Report

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#### **Request for Input on the Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program**

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Lower Colorado Region is seeking input on the Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program to establish longer-term durable system efficiency improvements that result in water conservation for the benefit of the lower Colorado River System, specifically the types and nature of projects that should be eligible and evaluation criteria for suggested projects. This is the second phase of a program announced in October 2022 after \$4 billion was provided in the Inflation Reduction Act for drought response, with a priority for the Colorado River Basin. Reclamation will accept proposals from Colorado River water delivery contract or entitlement holders and the Central Arizona Project water delivery contract or entitlement holders, including partnership with such entities. Comments on the process for evaluating proposals are due April 6, 2023. Reclamation anticipates sending out a solicitation for specific projects later this spring.

#### **Improved Water Supply Conditions in the Colorado River Basin**

The month of March has seen a series of cold and wet storms in the Colorado River Basin. The March 15 forecast of unregulated April through July 2023 inflow into Lake Powell was 156 percent of average, and indications are that the April 1 runoff forecast will be higher than that amount. With the significant increase in anticipated runoff, it is likely that Reclamation will switch to balancing operations for the remainder of water year 2023. Reclamation will make the official determination when it completes the April 24-month operational study in mid-April 2023. If the operations do switch to balancing, it means that Reclamation will adjust Lake Powell outflow so that both Lake Powell and Lake Mead will end the water year (September 30, 2023) with the same storage volume. The balancing releases do have a cap of 9.5 million acre-feet, and there are some operational challenges getting that much water out of Lake Powell, so the actual elevations might not match at the end of the water year. In any case, it is anticipated that Lake Powell will release significantly more water than had been planned a few months ago, and that Lake Mead and Lake Powell storage will increase somewhat this year. These storage increases might alleviate the need for short-term water supply reductions and provide the states time to focus on the post-2026 guidelines. It is anticipated that climate change impacts will require significant and permanent long-term reduction in deliveries from the Colorado River.