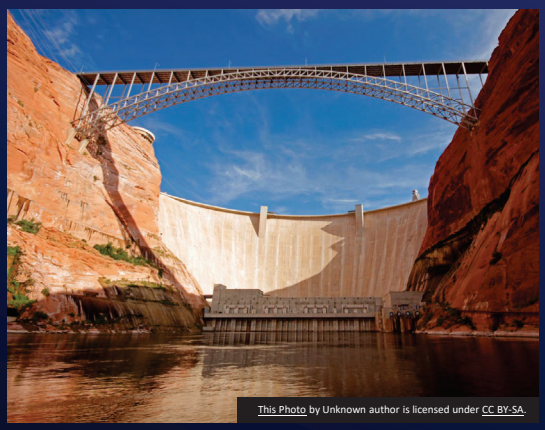
MWDOC Joint Planning Committee

Colorado River Negotiations Update

Shanti Rosset, Special Projects Manager
July 24, 2025

Colorado River Reservoir Management



- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) owns and operates Glen Canyon Dam and Hoover Dam
- Reclamation operates the dams and manages Lake Powell and Lake Mead according to the 2007 Interim Guidelines
- The 2007 Interim Guidelines include the requirement that Reclamation operates the reservoirs consistently various elements of the "Law of the River"
- Reclamation is currently developing Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

Colorado River Operations



Rights When Sufficient Water Available

Reclamation owns and operates the reservoirs, but the Colorado River basin states share the right to beneficially use Colorado River water. Mexico also has a treaty right to delivery of Colorado River

Upper Colorado River Basin States – right to deplete no more than 75 maf/10 yrs

- Colorado 51.75%
- Wyoming 14%
- New Mexico 11.25%
- Utah 23%

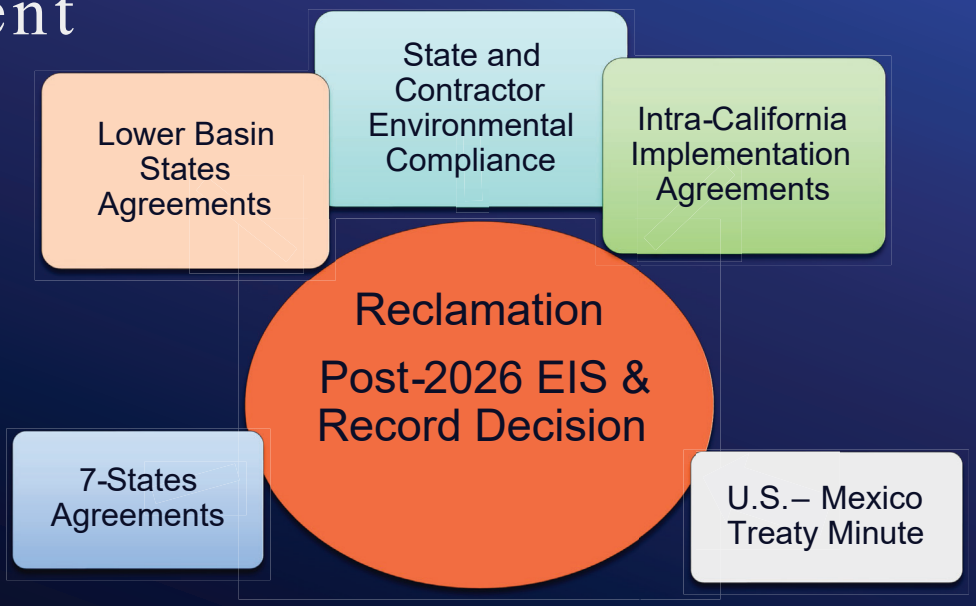
Lower Basin States – 8.5 maf/ yr

- Arizona 2.8 maf
- California 4.4 maf
- Nevada .3 maf

Mexico 1.5 maf

Post-2026 Development Processes

Implementation of the Post-2026 Guidelines will require agreements among the Lower Basin States and within California. Lower Basin operations also require ESA compliance and California's actions must comply with CEQA and CESA.



Status of Basin States Discussions

March 2024
Lower Basin and Upper Basin submit separate alternatives

January 2025
Biden Administration Alternatives Report issued - includes neither Basin's alternative

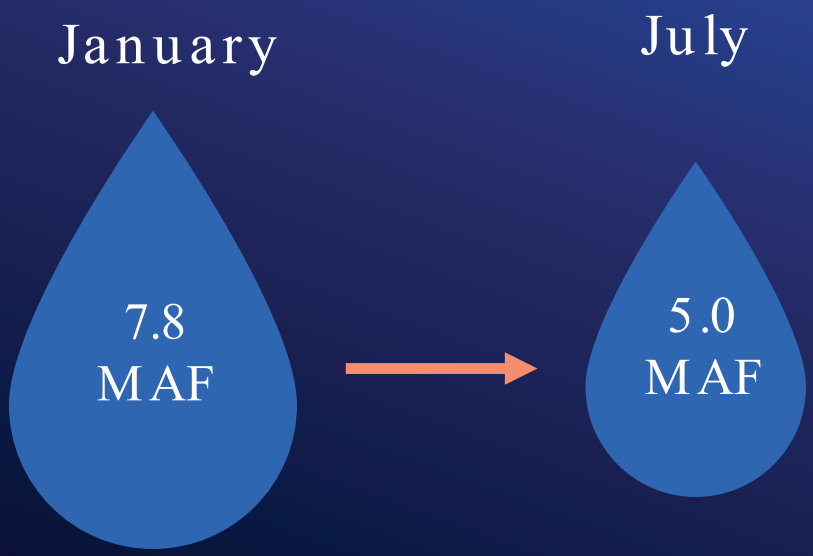
Now
Basin States explore Supply-Driven alternative

Reclamation's Post-2026 NEPA Timeline

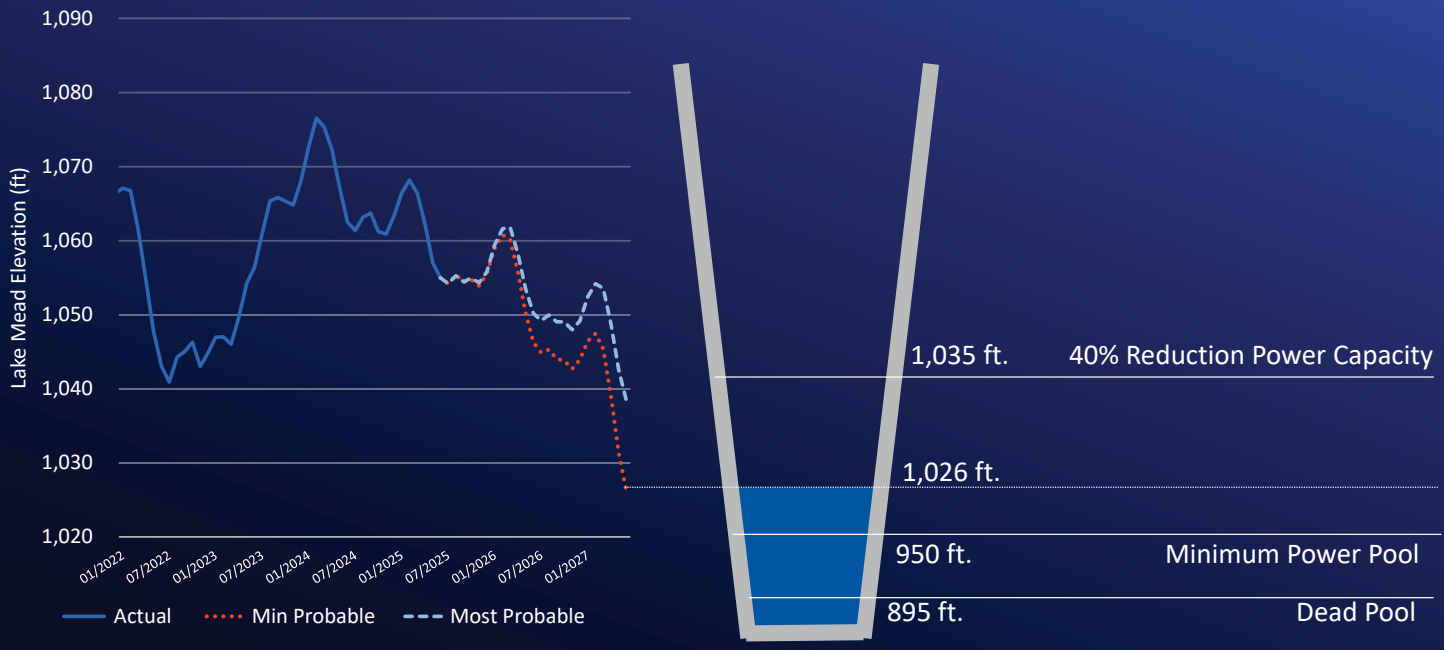


Planning for 2026 Operations Under Worse Hydrologic Conditions

Forecasted Water Year Unregulated Inflow to Lake Powell



Lake Mead Forecasted to Decrease to Near Critical Elevation if Next Year is Dry



Supply-Driven Alternative v. Current Ops

Lake Powell releases based on:	• Average of three previous year's hydrology • Forecasts and reservoir elevations
Upper Basin uses limited by:	• Fixed percentage of natural flow • Colorado River Compact
Lower Basin and Upper Basin involvement:	• "Divorce" of basins • Coordinated operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead

Without a Basins States Consensus

The Secretary of Interior in would use unilateral authority to operate Lake Powell and Lake Mead without Basin State's consensus

Potential Risks and Uncertainties

- Operations could default to something like the 1970 Long Range Operating Criteria – 8.23 maf fixed annual Lake Powell releases
- Lake Powell more likely to fall below the infrastructure protection elevation, leading to risk of reduced releases to Lower Basin
- Releases from Lake Powell likely to fall below volume required by Colorado River Compact, increasing interstate litigation risk
- Reaching new shortage sharing agreement with Mexico more difficult

Compact Compliance Analysis

- The Lower Basin States requested Reclamation include assumptions for purposes of Compact compliance in the NEPA analysis:
  - Required Upper Basin deliveries pursuant to Article III
  - Compact call by the Lower Division States
  - Upper Basin curtailment or other reductions
  - Related actions by the United States in management of federal reservoirs



No. 6227

United States of America

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

To whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

I Certify That the document annexed is a true copy of the [illegible] River Compact," signed 24th November, 1922, at the [illegible]nta Fe, New Mexico, the original of which is on file [illegible]partment.

In testimony whereof I, Charles E. Hughes, Secretary of State, have hereunto caused the Seal of the Department of State to be affixed and my name subscribed by the Chief Clerk of the said Department, at the City of Washington, this twenty-second day of December, 1922.

Charles E. Hughes
Secretary of State.
By [illegible]
Chief Clerk.

Forecasted Powell Release vs. Compact Requirements

The Central Arizona Project shared a similar graphic at a recent Arizona Reconsultation Committee. Sometime during WY 2027, releases from Lake Powell are forecast to fall short of the 82.5 maf/10 -year average.

