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## **Basin States collaborate to analyze potential solutions to protect the Colorado River System**

**SALT LAKE CITY** – The seven Colorado River Basin States have agreed that a proposal developed by the Lower Division States to conserve at least 3 million acre-feet of water by 2026 should be transmitted to the Secretary of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation for further analysis as part of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement process (SEIS) for the 2007 Guidelines that govern operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. In a letter sent to the Bureau of Reclamation on May 22, 2023, all seven Basin States requested that Reclamation further analyze the Lower Basin proposal, and concurrently urged Reclamation to turn to planning for post-2026 operations at Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

The Upper Colorado River Commission and the Upper Division States of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming remain committed to finding collaborative solutions within the means of the River. While the Upper Division States have not had an opportunity to review and analyze the Lower Basin proposal in detail, and therefore cannot endorse the proposal at this time, the UCRC Commissioners look forward to better understanding whether it can provide meaningful and enforceable reductions in use to address near-term challenges facing the Colorado River System.

“The wet winter has given us a bit of space to negotiate, but we must not squander this gift from mother nature. We look forward to better understanding what enforceable, binding water conservation agreements the Lower Division States may be able to provide. While temporary solutions are beneficial, we must continue to focus on the long-term goal of sustaining the system. We will analyze everything through the lens of how to best protect the 40 million people, 7 U.S. States, 2 countries, and 30 Tribal Nations that rely on this critical resource,” said Colorado’s Commissioner Becky Mitchell.

New Mexico’s Commissioner, Estevan Lopez, said: “We are pleased that the Lower Division States have been able to arrive at a plan that they think works. We have not had a chance to review it in detail, but we support its analysis by Reclamation in the SEIS. As the analysis progresses, we will continue to work with our sister States to develop a seven States Preferred Alternative that contains elements analyzed during the SEIS process.”

“It is encouraging to see the significant work that has been accomplished over the last few weeks by all parties involved with the DSEIS. The Lower Basin States have worked diligently to put forth a plan that has real promise to achieve significant reductions. While further analysis is necessary in the SEIS process and by the Upper Basin states, we are pleased to see such a plan put forward. We are committed to continue our work together on the SEIS as well as Post 2026 operations,” said Gene Shawcroft, Utah’s Commissioner.

“It’s very promising that the Lower Basin States have remained committed to working among themselves and with the Upper Basin States to develop short-term solutions to the supply and demand imbalance on the Colorado River. Even though we have questions about the details of the Lower Basin Plan, I am encouraged that the Plan could develop into a preferred alternative after analysis. We remain committed to reaching consensus around short-term solutions while also shifting immediately to the longer-term

solutions that will be developed in the post-2026 operating guidelines,” said Brandon Gebhart, Wyoming’s Commissioner.