



**Colorado River Basin States Representatives of  
Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming**

August 15, 2023

The Honorable Camille Touton  
Commissioner  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Sent via Electronic Mail

Dear Commissioner Touton:

The undersigned Governors' Representatives of the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming (collectively, the Basin States) respectfully submit the following comments in response to the Bureau of Reclamation's *Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Notice To Solicit Comments and Hold Public Scoping Meetings on the Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead*, Fed. Reg. Vol. 88, No. 116, p. 39455 (June 16, 2023). We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments to be considered in the upcoming environmental impact statement for post-2026 operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead (EIS or Post-2026 EIS).

The Basin States have a unique interest in the management of the Colorado River. Reclamation's engagement with the Basin States will therefore be essential to ensure the effectiveness of post-2026 operations. As parties and beneficiaries to the interstate compacts, treaties, laws, and supreme court decrees that govern the Colorado River, the Basin States have significant interests in protecting the water supplies of the forty million people who rely on the Colorado River. Recognizing the unique status of the Basin States, the Secretary of the Interior ("Secretary") must consult with the Governors' Representatives from each Basin State and collaborate on the development of alternatives for the Post-2026 EIS at Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The Secretary's options for post-2026 operations will be significantly limited without the Basin States' participation. The Basin States are committed to working with Reclamation through the NEPA process to develop the new guidelines for the Post-2026 EIS. In addition, the Basin States anticipate working together to develop an alternative for consideration and evaluation, as the States did for the NEPA process for the 2007 Guidelines.

Operational experience illustrates that the 2007 Guidelines and the 2019 Drought Contingency Plans are insufficient to properly manage Lakes Powell and Mead. Extended periods of dry hydrology and depleted reservoir conditions have highlighted the inadequacy of these measures to adapt to worsening hydrology.

The unprecedented challenges we face require greater collaboration to achieve sustainable solutions. We understand that the success of future operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead depends on working closely with Colorado River Basin Tribes, water users, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

Collaboration with Mexico is also critical. This should occur through a separate process involving the International Boundary and Water Commission. We expect that process to occur simultaneously with the Post-2026 EIS. Additionally, the active and direct participation of the Basin States in formal meetings with Mexico is essential.

By providing these comments, we do not waive any rights, including any claims or defenses, we may have or that may accrue under any existing federal or state law or administrative rule, regulation, or guideline. Any failure by the undersigned to address specific aspects of the NOI, shall not be construed as an endorsement or an admission with respect to any factual or legal issue for the purposes of any future legal, administrative, or other proceeding. Moreover, we reserve the right to provide further comments and engage with Reclamation as it proceeds with subsequent phases of the NEPA process.

We look forward to continuing our work to protect the Colorado River system now and in the future.

Respectfully,

Thomas Buschatzke  
Governor's Representative  
State of Arizona

Rebecca Mitchell  
Governor's Representative  
State of Colorado

J.B. Hamby  
Governor's Representative  
State of California

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cc: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation via Electronic Mail - [crbpost2026@usbr.gov](mailto:crbpost2026@usbr.gov)