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## **Upper Colorado River Commission reaffirms call for a supply-based water management solution amid recurring hydrology crisis**

*Upper Basin leaders reinforce commitment to a post-2026 framework grounded in realistic river conditions*

**SALT LAKE CITY, UT —** The Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) held its 312th Regular Meeting on June 26 in Salt Lake City amid worsening hydrologic forecasts and declining reservoir levels that mirror the near-crisis conditions of 2021–2022. The Commissioners from the Upper Division States — Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming — underscored their focus on supply-based river management, collaborative problem solving and Upper Basin’s actions and commitments to support the Colorado River system.

The Colorado River system cannot support long-term water reliability without shifting to supply-based management. The Upper Basin reaffirmed its commitment to developing a post-2026 operating framework grounded in actual hydrologic conditions. Long-term solutions must reflect the River’s true hydrology, not unrealistic demands.

“The quantification of hydrologic shortage is incredibly important. No amount of lawyering is going to fix the math problem... we must live with the river we have, not the river we want,” said Commissioner Becky Mitchell of Colorado.

Top four takeaways from the 312th UCRC Regular Meeting:

### **1. Upper Basin’s Continued Commitment to a Consensus-Based Post-2026 Framework**

The Upper Division States remain actively engaged and committed to close collaboration with Reclamation, the Lower Basin, Tribal Nations and other stakeholders to support sustainable and science-based management of the Colorado River. They reaffirmed the urgent need for a post-2026 operational framework grounded in actual hydrologic conditions — not water demands — reflecting the realities of a changing climate and limited water supply.

“We are dedicated to a consensus agreement. Anything else is likely to lead to litigation... and that leads to years and years of uncertainty, and none of us will win in that context,” said Commissioner Estevan Lopez of New Mexico.

### **2. Water Crisis Parallels with 2021–2022**

The hydrology of 2025 is once again sounding the alarm, echoing the extreme conditions of 2021–2022. Unregulated inflows to Lake Powell are projected to be less than 54% of the 30-year average, placing the system at renewed risk. With depleted storage in Lake Powell and

Lake Mead, the dry conditions may push reservoir levels to critical thresholds. Current conditions underscore the unsustainability of demand-driven operations and the urgent need for a supply-based management approach.

“You can’t reduce what doesn’t come down the stream. And that’s the reality we’re faced with,” said Commissioner Gene Shawcroft of Utah. “The only way we’re going to achieve a successful outcome is if we’re willing to work together — and not just protect our own interests.”

### **3. Upper Basin Taking Action**

The Upper Division States are proactively addressing dry conditions through established administrative and regulatory tools, implementing state-of-the-art water measurement technologies, and developing new water management tools through pilot projects. They are taking necessary steps in cooperation with Reclamation, including planning for potential coordinated reservoir operations to protect Lake Powell. Water managers in the Upper Basin are reducing uses by administering water rights and managing within the river’s limits. The four states are also advancing pilot projects to develop new operational flexibility. The Upper Basin is meeting its commitments, acting responsibly and operating within both legal and hydrologic constraints.

“We are committed to being part of the solution, but we can’t be the whole solution or even a predominant portion of the solution,” said Commissioner Brandon Gebhart of Wyoming. “No viable framework can require the Upper Basin to shoulder all of the risks of worsening hydrology going forward.”

### **4. Upper Basin Compact Compliance and Responsibility**

The Upper Basin has always maintained compliance with the 1922 Colorado River Compact. As outlined by the Compact, the Upper Basin is obligated to manage its uses to remain in full compliance with Compact requirements, ensuring flows at Lee Ferry remain above that commitment.

As the seven Basin States work toward new post-2026 operational guidelines, the Upper Basin emphasized that durable, equitable solutions require an honest accounting of the River’s limitations and a shared commitment to operating within them.

For more information about the UCRC or to access hydrologic data, visit [www.ucrccommission.com](http://www.ucrccommission.com)

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