



UPPER COLORADO RIVER COMMISSION

50 S. 600 E. Ste #100 • Salt Lake City, UT 84102 • 801-531-1150 • www.ucrccommission.com

May 1, 2026

Andrea Travnicek
Assistant Secretary of Water and Science
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Submitted to andrea_travnicek@ios.doi.gov

Dear Assistant Secretary Travnicek,

On Friday, April 24, 2026, you invited the Colorado River Basin States to provide additional input on the Post-2026 operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead (Post-2026 NEPA process). On April 29, 2026, Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), David Palumbo, in his email to the seven Governors' representatives, noted that Reclamation would provide the Upper Division States (UDS) with further opportunity to respond to any ideas or concepts that may be shared pursuant to that invitation. The UDS, acting through the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC), maintain that absent a seven Basin States consensus agreement, Reclamation must select its Preferred Alternative and issue a Record of Decision consistent with the ongoing Post-2026 NEPA process. Any additional input on the Post-2026 NEPA process, including a Preferred Alternative selected by Reclamation, must adhere to the geographic scope described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and must be limited to the existing authorities of the Secretary of Interior and Reclamation.

The UDS have consistently advocated for Post-2026 operations that address current and future risks to the system caused by climate change and current water demands on Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Since 2000, there has been a growing imbalance with water use exceeding supply. As a result, storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead has been significantly depleted. Climate science and Reclamation's projections indicate the Colorado River Basin should expect continued long-term and sustained drought, increasing temperatures, low soil moisture, and low runoff conditions. Post-2026 operations must sustain Lake Powell and Lake Mead into the future through a wide range of water supply conditions. Demand-driven operations cannot be sustained.

Over the course of the Post-2026 NEPA process, the UDS have provided input designed to address the purpose and need identified in the Federal Register Doc. 2023–23127, filed October 19, 2023.

On March 5, 2024, the UDS submitted a proposed alternative for consideration by Reclamation in the Post-2026 NEPA process and subsequently submitted a refined alternative on December 31, 2024. This refined UDS alternative included operational rules that effectively respond to actual hydrologic conditions, appropriately coordinate Lake Powell and Lake Mead operations while managing risks, and rebuild storage within existing legal authorities. Neither the original nor the refined UDS alternative was selected by Reclamation for analysis as a proposed alternative in the Post-2026 NEPA process. Finally, on March 2, 2026, the UDS, both individually and collectively through the UCRC, submitted comments on the DEIS.

On a separate but parallel track, in the context of negotiations among the seven Basin States to try to reach a consensus agreement on post-2026 operations, the UDS offered numerous compromise proposals. These compromises for both short-term and longer-term operations were offered as consideration for a Basin States consensus agreement in advance of the Reclamation-imposed February 14, 2026, deadline. Even though our proposals were dismissed, we remain willing to engage in negotiations on a consensus agreement, including for shorter-term operations.

Additionally, throughout the entire negotiation process, the UDS have committed to actions in the Upper Basin that are beyond the scope of the Post-2026 NEPA process but will complement those operations. Current and projected hydrology warrants complementary actions to support Lake Powell, and the UDS have demonstrated their commitment to such actions. On April 21, 2026, the UDS approved the release of up to 1 million acre-feet from Flaming Gorge under the 2026 Drought Response Operations Plan. Pursuant to the December 2, 2024, Memorandum of Understanding between the UDS and Reclamation, the UDS are also implementing Provisional Accounting projects that contribute additional water to Lake Powell and the Upper Initial Units (UIU). These projects are a precursor to an agreement between the UDS and Reclamation which properly recognizes and accounts for the water contributed. The UDS look forward to working with Reclamation to develop agreements, outside of the Post-2026 NEPA process, regarding the operation of the UIUs and contribution activities that support Lake Powell operations.

Given the current impasse between the Upper and Lower Basins, on April 23, 2026, the UDS proposed mediation. We remain committed to exhausting all possibilities for a consensus solution even at this late hour and believe there is merit in neutral mediation. Accordingly, we will continue to pursue mediation as a path forward.

The UDS continue to believe that a consensus Basin States agreement is the optimal outcome for each Basin State and the Colorado River system as a whole. In the absence of consensus, the Preferred Alternative must adhere to the scope of the Post-2026 NEPA process and must fit squarely within existing federal authorities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Cullom', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles Cullom
Executive Director
Upper Colorado River Commission