



Arizona Department Of Water Resources

PRESS RELEASE

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Statement from Arizona Department of Water Resources regarding the Bureau of Reclamation's August 24-month Study report

- As a result of today's 24-Month Study of conditions on the Colorado River system, Arizona will leave 192,000 acre-feet of its 2020 allocation in Lake Mead
- The May 20 Drought Contingency Plan agreement among the seven Colorado River States and the Department of the Interior, as well as Minute 323 of the Water Treaty between the U.S. and the Republic of Mexico, will prompt more participating entities to leave water, earlier and at higher levels, in Lake Mead
- The conditions set out in the May 20 DCP agreement relieve concerns of Arizona, Nevada and California that water in Lake Mead may be "stranded" there as a result of shortage declarations. Instead, the DCP encourages those States to leave Intentionally Created Surplus water in Lake Mead
- The months-long efforts of the Steering Committee co-chaired by ADWR Director Tom Buschatzke and Central Arizona Project General Manager Ted Cooke to mitigate the effects of Colorado River delivery shortfalls yielded a consensus approach that will help Arizona contend with a drier future

The release today of the Bureau of Reclamation's August 2019 24-Month Study of conditions on the Colorado River system indicates that Lake Mead elevations at the end of 2019 – slightly under 1,090 feet -- will result in a "Tier Zero" condition in the reservoir. That means Arizona will take a reduction of 192,000 acre-feet in its 2020 deliveries of Colorado River water to the Central Arizona Project canal system.

The delivery reduction in Arizona's 2.8 million acre-foot annual allocation is in accordance with a set of Interim Guidelines set by the Colorado River States in 2007, in combination with the incremental contributions established by the States in the Drought Contingency Plan agreements signed earlier this year.

The delivery reduction will help bolster surface levels at Lake Mead, which, according to some projections, could fall to critical levels within a few years if left unaddressed.

Thanks largely to the DCP, however, Arizona will not be alone in leaving portions of its allocation in the reservoir.

As a result of the DCP agreements signed by the States on May 20, Nevada also will leave 8,000 acre-feet of its 300,000 acre-foot annual allocation in Lake Mead. The DCP agreement also stipulates that California will begin leaving a portion of its allocation in the reservoir should surface levels go below 1,045 feet.

Additionally, the Republic of Mexico will leave 41,000 acre-feet of its annual allocation in Lake Mead, according to the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan that Mexico recently signed with the U.S. The BWSCP was made possible by Minute 323 to the U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty, which was entered into force in September 2017.

Those efforts – plus a much deeper than average snowpack this winter in the Rocky Mountains – have reduced the risks to the Colorado River system caused by lingering drought conditions, as well as over-allocation.

Arizona recently took some major steps to mitigate the impact in-state of delivery shortages to Central Arizona Project system water-users.

On January 31, the Arizona Legislature passed, and Governor Doug Ducey signed, legislation authorizing the Director of ADWR to join the other six Colorado River States in signing the Drought Contingency Plan. The package of legislation also included funding for conserving water in Lake Mead and for mitigating the impact of the shortage on Arizona water users, largely agricultural users in the CAP system.

Related facts:

- Arizona has been taking voluntary reductions in its Colorado River allocation close to 192,000 acre-feet since 2015. In 2015, the State saved 195,103 acre-feet in Lake Mead; in 2017, 290,497 acre-feet
- All told, Arizona anticipates saving nearly 279,701 acre-feet in Lake Mead in 2019 through programs such as the Pilot System Conservation Program and through Intentionally Created Surplus

See also:

<https://wordpress.com/post/azwaternews.com/1535>

<https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/newsrelease/detail.cfm?RecordID=67383>

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