



NEWS

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release
February 28, 2007

Contact: Robert Walsh, 702-293-8421,
rwalsh@lc.usbr.gov or Barry Wirth,
801-524-3774, bwirth@uc.usbr.gov

Reclamation Releases Draft EIS on Proposed Guidelines for Managing Colorado River During Drought Conditions

Public Hearings Scheduled in Nevada, Arizona and Utah

WASHINGTON -- The Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation today released for public review and comment a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposed interim guidelines for managing the Colorado River Storage System, particularly under drought and low reservoir conditions.

When approved and in place, the guidelines would be used for determining shortages in the Lower Colorado Basin and coordinating operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead reservoirs.

As part of its efforts to seek public input on the draft EIS, Reclamation has scheduled three public hearings to receive written or oral comments. Meeting dates, times and locations are:

- Tuesday, April 3, 2007 – 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Henderson Convention Center, Sierra Room, 200 South Water Street, Henderson, Nevada
- Wednesday, April 4, 2007 – 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Phoenix Airport Marriott, Buckhorn Room, 1101 North 44th Street, Phoenix, Arizona
- Thursday, April 5, 2007 – 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Hilton Salt Lake City Center, Canyon Room A & B, 255 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah

"Reclamation has developed this draft EIS and the proposed operational guidelines after extensive collaboration with several federal agencies, members of the general public, representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin States, non-governmental entities, Tribes and other stakeholders," said Mark Limbaugh, Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.

"I want to thank the Basin States, environmental organizations, tribes and all those who have participated for their contributions to date," Limbaugh added. "I encourage them to continue to participate fully in this process so we can meet our goal of having a Record of Decision completed before the end of this year."

Development of these guidelines was undertaken to improve Reclamation's management of the Colorado River, provide mainstream U.S. users of Colorado River water a greater degree of predictability with respect to the amount of annual water deliveries in future years, and provide additional mechanisms for the storage and delivery of water supplies in Lake Mead.

The guidelines – which would extend through 2026, are designed to provide detailed and objective guidance for the operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead under low water conditions. They also will allow Colorado River water users in Arizona, California, and Nevada to know when, and by how much, water deliveries would be reduced in drought and other low reservoir conditions.

The Draft EIS presents four possible action alternatives for implementation, plus a "No Action Alternative," but does not identify a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative will be identified after public comments on the document are received, and will be expressed in the Final EIS that will be published in September 2007.

Comments on the Draft EIS must be submitted no later than Monday, April 30, 2007, to: Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region, Bureau of Reclamation, Attention: BCOO-1000, P.O. Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-1470; faxogram at (702) 293-8156; or e-mail at strategies@lc.usbr.gov.

The document is available for viewing and downloading on Reclamation's website at: <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/strategies.html>. A compact disc or hard copy is available if requested in writing from: Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region, Bureau of Reclamation, Attention: BCOO-1000, P.O. Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-1470; faxogram at (702) 293-8156; or e-mail at strategies@lc.usbr.gov.

The Draft EIS is also available for public review at Reclamation's Lower Colorado Regional Office Library, 400 Railroad Ave, Boulder City, Nevada, and at several public libraries throughout the Colorado River Basin states.

A listing of library locations where the Draft EIS is available is attached, as is a list of the federal cooperating agencies.

Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in the 17 Western States. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Visit our website at <http://www.usbr.gov>.

ATTACHMENT

Library Listing and Federal Cooperators List for Draft EIS on Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lakes Powell and Mead

Copies of the Draft EIS on the proposed adoption of interim Colorado River Lower Basin shortage guidelines and coordinated operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead, particularly under drought and low reservoir conditions are available for public inspection and review at the following locations:

- Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Regional Office, 400 Railroad Avenue, Boulder City, Nevada
- Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado Regional Office, 125 South State Street, Room 7220, Salt Lake City, Utah
- Bureau of Reclamation, Phoenix Area Office, 6150 West Thunderbird Road, Glendale, Arizona
- Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma Area Office, 7301 Calle Agua Salada, Yuma, Arizona
- Bureau of Reclamation Library, Denver Federal Center, 6th Avenue and Kipling, Building 67, Room 167, Denver, Colorado
- Department of the Interior Natural Resources Library, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C.
- Yuma County Library, 185 South Main Street, Yuma, Arizona
- Palo Verde Valley Library, 125 West Chanslor Way, Blythe, California
- Mohave County Library, 1170 Hancock Road, Bullhead City, Arizona
- Laughlin Library, 2840 South Needles Highway, Laughlin, Nevada
- Las Vegas Clark County Library, 833 Las Vegas Boulevard N, Las Vegas, Nevada
- James I. Gibson Library, 280 Water Street, Henderson, Nevada

Cooperating agencies

Bureau of Indian Affairs; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; National Park Service; Western Area Power Administration, Department of Energy; and the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, Department of State.