



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

April 22, 2022

The Honorable Tanya Trujillo
Assistant Secretary, Water & Science
U. S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary Trujillo:

The Governors’ representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin States write in response to your letter dated April 8, 2022, regarding coordinated operations of Glen Canyon Dam and Hoover Dam. As you know, pursuant to applicable law, the Governors’ representatives have worked cooperatively over the past 50 years with the Secretary of the Interior regarding adoption and implementation of the Long-Range Operating Criteria for Colorado River Reservoirs and other related instruments, including the 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead (73 FR 19873), and the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan.

Most recently we have taken important proactive actions pursuant to the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan in both the Upper and Lower Basins, with the proposed 2022 Drought Response Operations Plan, the “500+ Plan” signed in December 2021, and in our cooperative efforts with the Republic of Mexico. Basin Tribes, water users, and Non-Governmental Organizations have been instrumental in the implementation of these efforts. Continuing these efforts is imperative as we address long—term supply and demand imbalances, including our efforts to support development of post-2026 operating guidelines.

Our collective efforts notwithstanding, record low runoff, particularly over the past two years, has contributed to historically-low storage in Colorado River reservoirs. We appreciate your continuing efforts to work closely with each of the Governor’s representatives as we face extraordinary circumstances on the Colorado River as a result of historic drought, low-runoff conditions, and depleted storage over the past two decades.

Today, water storage in Colorado River reservoirs is at a historic low, with Lake Powell levels representing just 25 percent of remaining live storage. Of particular concern to the Basin States is the potential for Lake Powell to drop below elevation 3525’ for extended periods of time, and threatening further decline below elevation 3490’. As your letter indicated: *“[i]n such circumstances, Glen Canyon Dam facilities face unprecedented operational reliability challenges, water users in the Basin face increased uncertainty,*

downstream resources could be impacted, the western electrical grid would experience uncertain risk and instability, and water and power supplies to the West and Southwestern United States would be subject to increased operational uncertainty.” We recognize the urgency created by current conditions in the Basin; in fact, hydrologic conditions in the Basin have continued to decline since your April 8, 2022, letter to the Governors’ representatives.

It is our collective judgment that additional cooperative actions should be taken this spring to reduce the risk of Lake Powell declining below critical elevations. Important ongoing efforts to implement the proposed 2022 Drought Response Operations Plan are underway pursuant to the Upper Division States’ April 21, 2022, recommendation to release 500,000 acre-feet of water from Flaming Gorge reservoir, and we share your optimism that final decisions pursuant to this process can be completed within the next few weeks. In addition to these important ongoing efforts, we support the proposal in your April 8, 2022, letter that Reclamation implement the 480,000 acre-foot reduction to the 2022 water year release from Glen Canyon Dam to reduce the risks we all face. We acknowledge that such temporary adjustments would be implemented within the provisions of Sections 6 and 7.D. of the 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead (73 FR 19873). Additionally, given the increased probabilities that Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell will be operating in low reservoir conditions, we urge Reclamation to implement the timely evaluation of any needed maintenance or feasible modifications to water delivery or hydropower generation infrastructure at the facility.

We request that such temporary reductions in releases from Glen Canyon Dam be implemented in a manner that is operationally neutral for tier and release determinations made pursuant to the 2007 Interim Guidelines, the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan and Minute 323. Operational determinations should be made as if the 480,000 acre-feet had been released from Glen Canyon Dam in 2022 water year. Also, water year 2023 releases should be carefully monitored and be the subject of consultation with the Basin States to preserve the benefits to Glen Canyon Dam facilities and operations from both the proposed 2022 Drought Response Operations Plan and the proposed temporary reductions in releases from Glen Canyon Dam.

We further request your commitment to work closely with the Governors’ representatives to preserve flexibility to address changing conditions, including:

- to ensure that the 2022 release modifications can be tracked in future years;
- to evaluate continuing risks of Lake Powell and Lake Mead reaching critical elevations and developing strategies to mitigate such risks; and
- to address releases in the future in an appropriate manner, at an appropriate time, of the temporary release reductions, with support from the Basin States, given all relevant operational considerations for Glen Canyon and Hoover Dams.

Furthermore, beyond the expected short-term benefits of this proposed action it is important to also acknowledge that there will be attendant consequences associated with the reduction in releases from Glen Canyon Dam. One such consequence will be the negative financial impacts to power contractors related to hydroelectric energy generation.

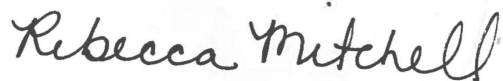
This recommendation and any subsequent actions to implement this recommendation shall not prejudice any positions within either the upper or lower basin.

We are committed to work closely with you and your staff as you consider these recommendations. We would hope that these temporary operational adjustments can be promptly implemented, in conjunction with the proposed 2022 Drought Response Operations Plan, to ensure the maximum reduction in operational risk and uncertainty in 2022. We also believe that by recommending that Reclamation undertake these temporary measures this year, each of the states is demonstrating its firm commitment to turn greater focus to the near-term steps necessary to stabilize the system and help prevent the reservoirs from declining to critical elevations.

Respectfully,



Thomas Buschatzke
Governor's Representative
State of Arizona



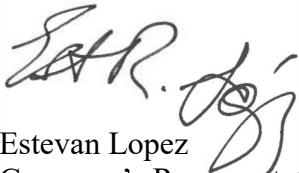
Rebecca Mitchell
Governor's Representative
State of Colorado



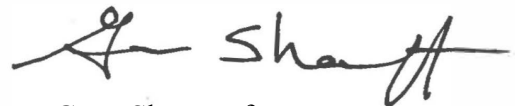
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