

***Managing Colorado River Water Resources:  
Three State Practices and Perspectives  
– Arizona, Nevada & Utah  
2022 Colorado River Forum***



Tom Buschatzke  
Director

Arizona Department of Water Resources  
October 18, 2022

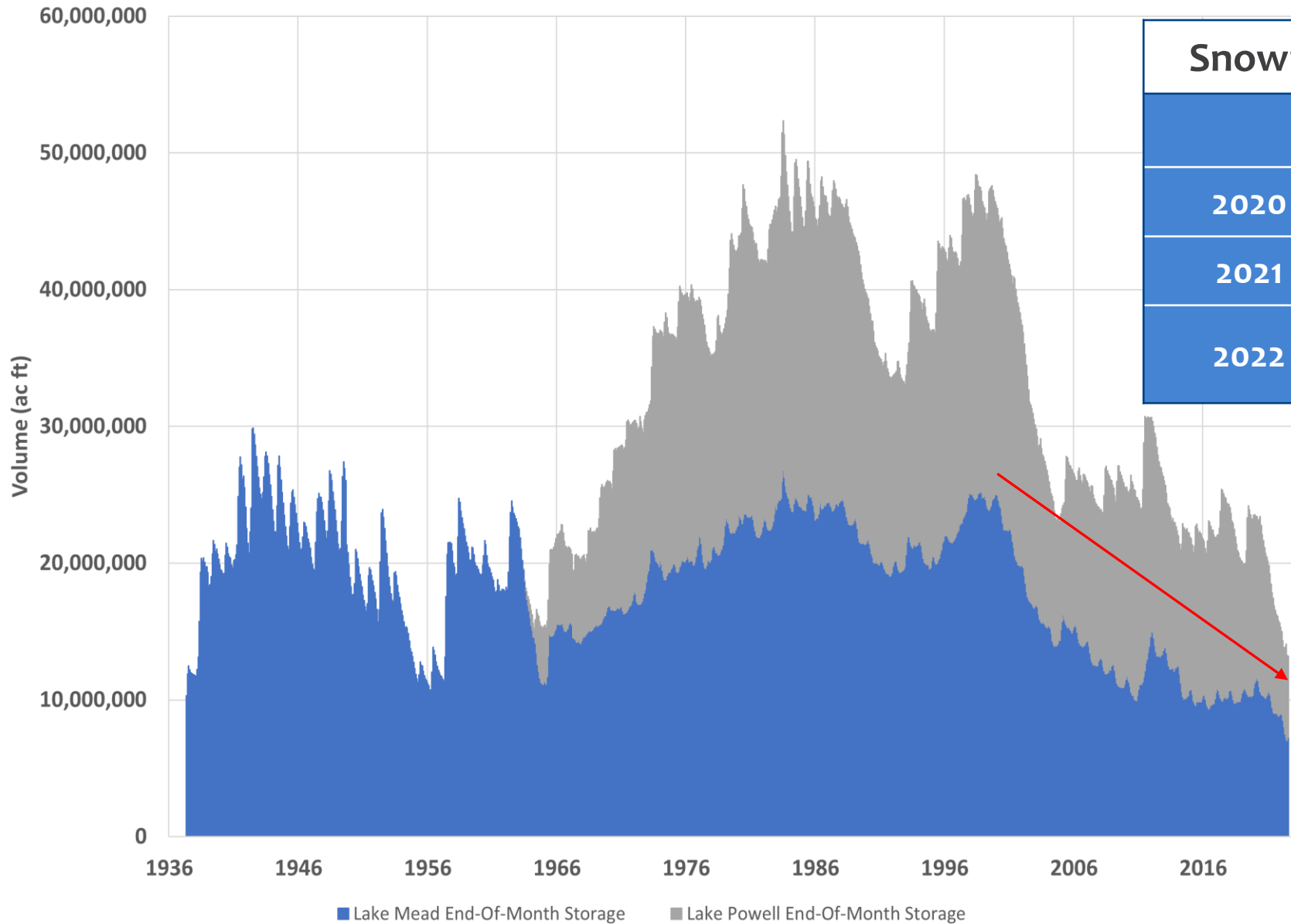
# Colorado River Basin Map

- Supplies water to 40 million people
- 30 Tribes
- Provides water to Denver, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Los Angeles and San Diego
- Irrigates ~5 million acres of farmland
- Includes 60 million acre-feet of storage capacity
- Generates clean hydropower for the Western power grid
- Supports National Parks, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and monuments



# Recent Hydrology

## Combined System End-Of-Month Storage



## Snowpack vs. Runoff (% of average)

	Snowpack	Runoff
2020	105%	56%
2021	86%	41%
2022	90%	63%

# Unprecedented Actions Necessary to Support the Colorado River System

**On Tuesday, June 14, Camille Touton, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, testified to the U.S. Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee that “unprecedented actions” are necessary to protect the Colorado River system**

- Between two and four million acre-feet of additional conservation above Tier reductions is needed just to protect critical levels beginning in 2023
- Critical levels at Lake Powell (3,500 feet of elevation) and at Lake Mead (1,000 feet of elevation) must be maintained
- Commissioner Touton identified a mid-August goal for an agreement among the seven Basin States

# Lower Colorado River Tier 2a Shortage in 2023

## **Tier 2a reductions include:**

- Arizona: 592,000 acre-feet, which is approximately 21% of the state's annual apportionment
- Nevada: 25,000 acre-feet, which is 8% of the state's annual apportionment
- Mexico: 104,000 acre-feet, which is approximately 7% of the country's annual allotment
- There is no required water savings contribution for California in 2023 under this operating condition

# Nevada Water Manager's Recommendations to DOI

1. **Create new beneficial use criteria for Lower Basin water users, eliminating wasteful and antiquated water use practices and uses of water no longer appropriate for this Basin's limited resources.**
2. Develop criteria for managing facilities, reservoirs, and projects for health and human safety operations in order to create certainty and predictability in the face of further reservoir declines.
3. Create a basin-wide municipal turf removal program to increase payments to customers where publicly available programs already exist.
4. Expand agricultural efficiency improvements that result in consumptive use reductions.
5. Require seasonal irrigation schedules be implemented and enforced.
6. Invest in water reuse, water recycling, and desalination programs.
7. Purchase additional lands under the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program to prepare for habitat restoration under a significantly modified system.
8. Incentivize conversions to lower water-use crops.
9. **Charge each contractor for evaporation and losses in the Lower Basin.**
10. Reprioritize Salinity Control Act funding to only those projects that reduce consumptive uses of water, including fallowing agreements and the purchase of marginal lands.
11. Accelerate and fund necessary improvements and modifications at Glen Canyon Dam that will increase predictability and reliability of releases under low reservoir conditions.
12. Prioritize federal funding for drought mitigation to those projects that provide meaningful long-term and permanent reductions in use.
13. Provide proactive and aggressive federal leadership.

# September Announcements from DOI

- Continue to work with Lower Basin States on developing voluntary measures and agreements
- Working with Upper Basin States to support their 5-point plan
- Making investments in drought resilience and water management from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act

\*Source: “Interior Department Announces Next Steps to Address Drought Crisis Gripping the Colorado River Basin”, U.S. Department of the Interior, September 22, 2022. Press Release. Available at <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-department-announces-next-steps-address-drought-crisis-gripping-colorado>

# Sept. Announcements from DOI, cont.

- Moving forward with administrative actions needed to authorize a **reduction of Glen Canyon Dam releases below 7 MAF to protect critical infrastructure**
- Preparing to take action to make additional reductions in 2023 through an administrative process to evaluate and adjust triggering elevations and/or **increasing reduction volumes pursuant to 2007 Interim Guidelines**
- Accelerating ongoing maintenance actions and studies of bypass tubes at Glen Canyon Dam
- Ensuring lower basin water use satisfy appropriate beneficial use standards, including consideration of health and safety requirements
- **Assessing how to account for system losses due to evaporation, seepage and other losses**



# Questions?

**Tom Buschatzke**  
**Director**

**Phone:** 602.771.8426

**Email:** [tbuschatzke@azwater.gov](mailto:tbuschatzke@azwater.gov)

**Website:** [www.azwater.gov](http://www.azwater.gov)

**Twitter:** [@azwater](https://twitter.com/azwater)

