

The Colorado River

The Here and Now



November 13, 2025

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THE BASIC MATH

COLORADO RIVER COMPACT

1922

- River divided equally, sort of, 7.5 MAF to each
- Lower Basin gets 7.5 MAF + 1.0 MAF more
- Upper Basin gets 7.5 MAF, with a big catch
- If deliveries required to Mexico in future, split equally between Upper and Lower Basin



Compact Language

There is hereby apportioned to the Upper Basin and the Lower Basin, respectively, the exclusive use of 7,500,000 acre-feet of water per annum

The Lower Basin is given the right to increase its use by one million acre-feet per annum

The Upper Basin will not cause the flow of the river at Lee Ferry to be depleted below 75,000,000 acre feet over any period of ten consecutive years

Legal Allocations

1922 Compact

7.5 MAF for Upper Basin

7.5 + 1.0 MAF for Lower Basin

1944 Mexico Treaty

1.5 MAF to Mexico

Compact

16.0 MAF

Treaty with Mexico

1.5

Total

17.5 MAF

Add in evaporation

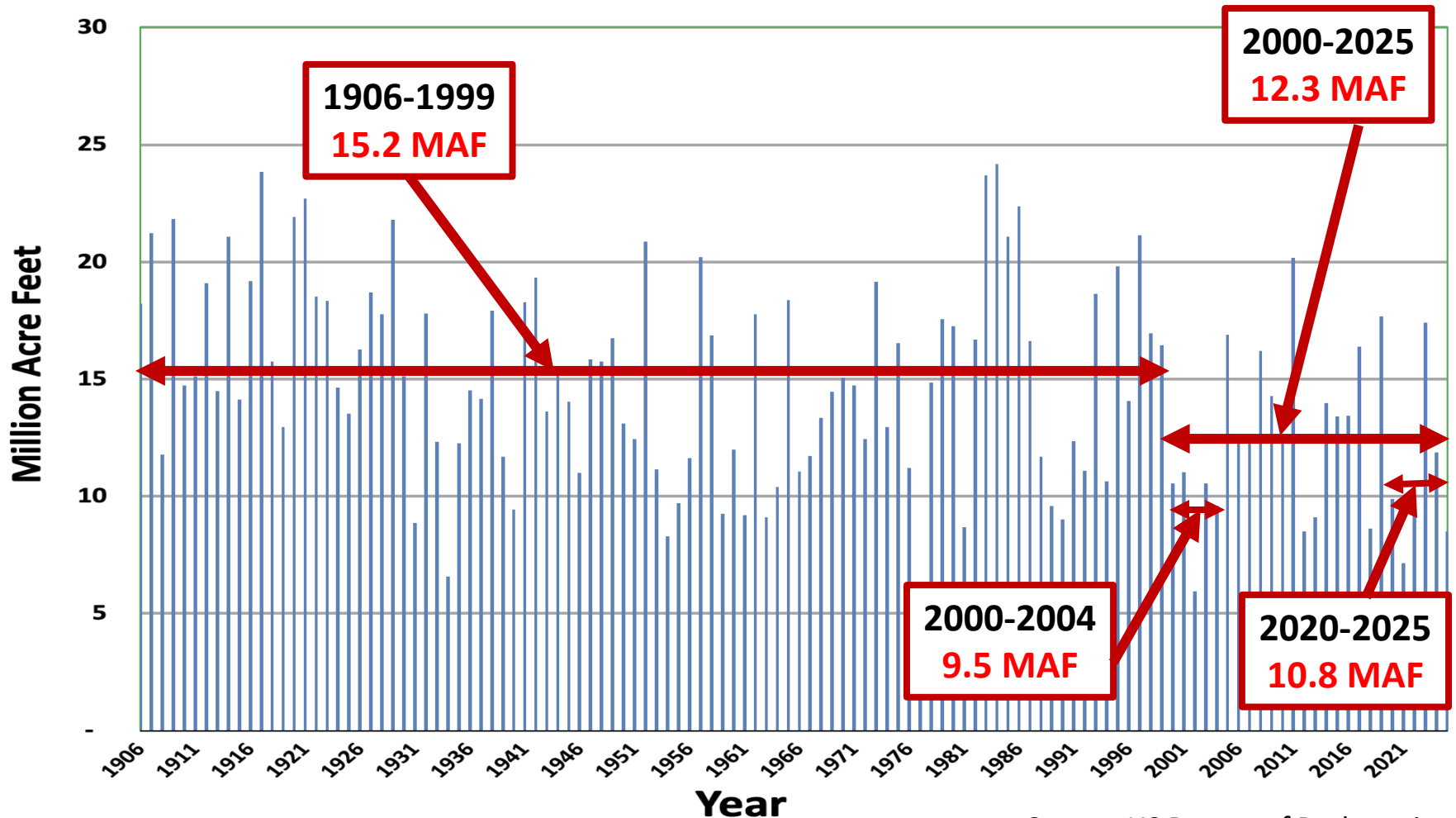
1.5

LEGAL PLUS PHYSICAL

19.0 MAF

AVAILABLE SUPPLY

Colorado River Natural Flow at Lee Ferry 1906 - 2025



Source: US Bureau of Reclamation

Inflows and Outflows

(in millions of acre feet)

Natural Flow (2020-2025) **11.6**

Outflows

UB use 4.0-4.5

LB mainstem use 6.0-7.5

LB evap & losses 1.5

Mexico 1.5

13.0 – 15.0

Deficit Balance

1.4 – 3.4

Results

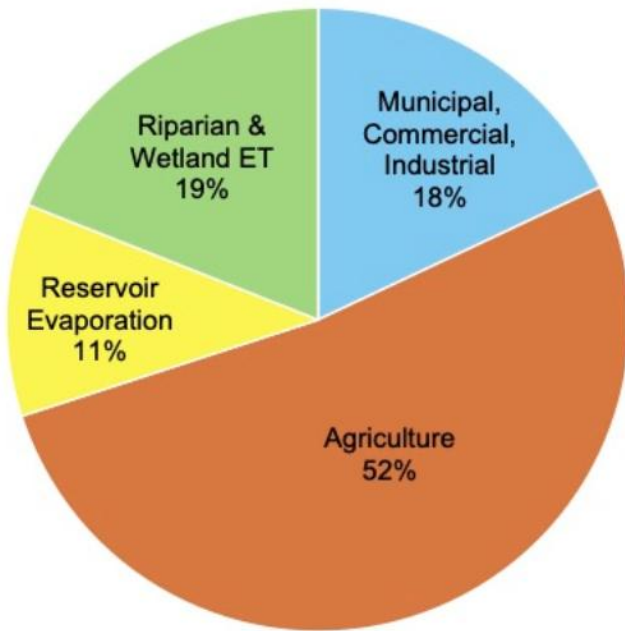
Powell + Mead Combined Contents



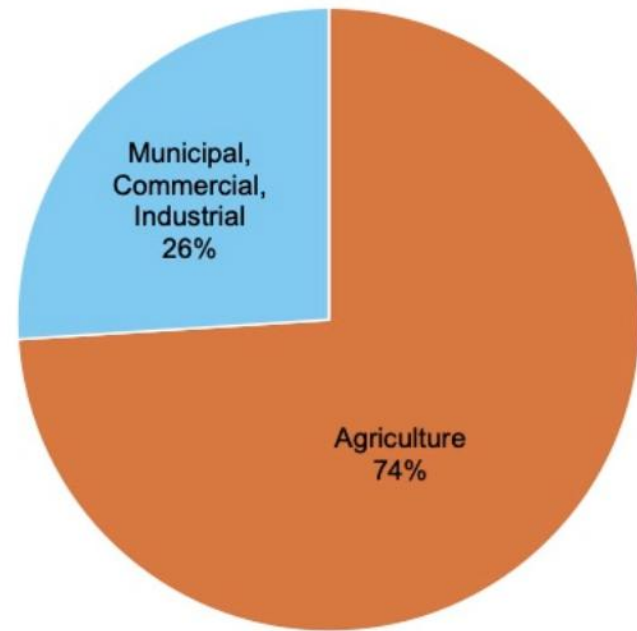
Source: US Bureau of Reclamation

Consumptive Uses of Water

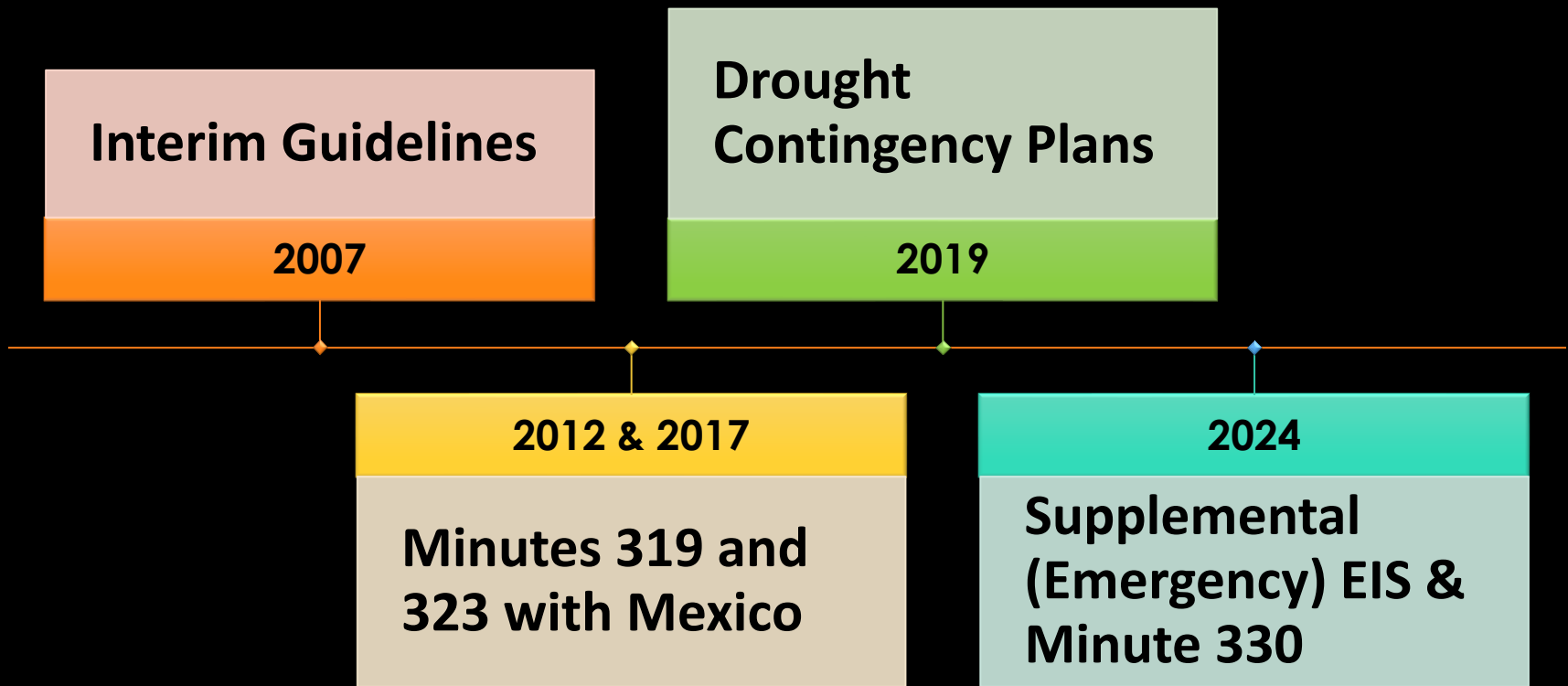
Colorado River Basin
All Water Consumption



Colorado River Basin
Direct Human Use Only



21st Century Efforts to Address the Deficit



MAJOR FEATURES

- Cuts to Lower Basin allocations based on elevations in Lake Mead
- Cuts to deliveries to Mexico
- Balancing of contents of Mead and Powell
- Voluntary, temporary, and compensated additional conservation
- All expire in 2026
- They've all made it better, but they haven't solved the problem!

THE CHALLENGE



Because all the agreements/guidelines expire in 2026, new process started to determine future operations

CURRENT STATUS

- Reclamation performing hydrologic modeling of a wide range of scenarios
 - Trying to include any possible scenario
- Draft EIS to be published next month
- 7-state consensus framework due Nov. 11



7-STATE FRAMEWORK



THE COLORADO SUN

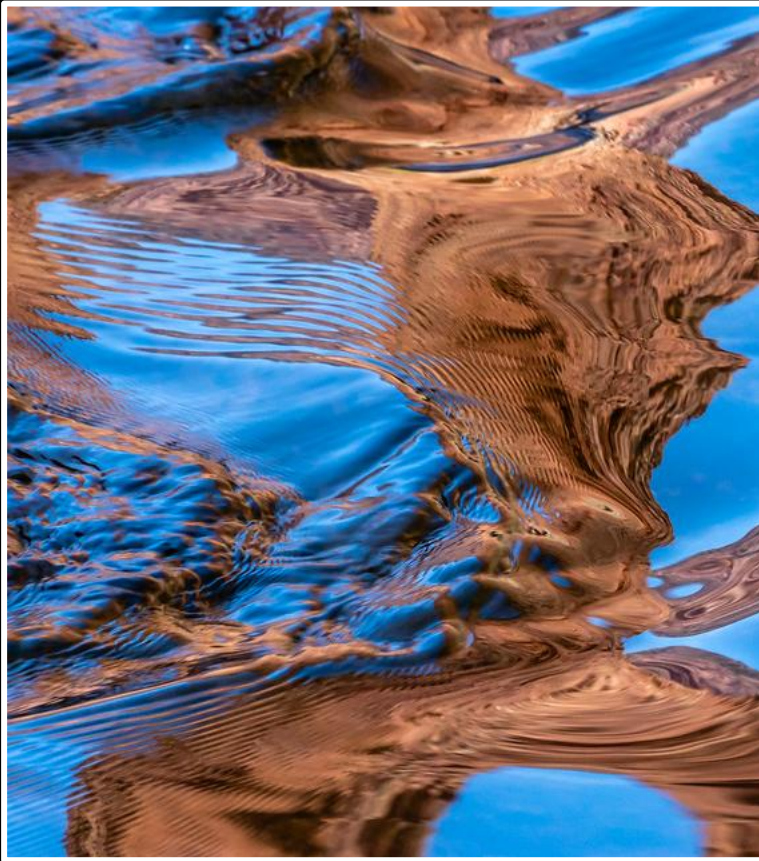
Nov. 11, 2025

NEWS: NEWS

Colorado River negotiators stumble past federal deadline without joint agreement

The seven states at the table say they've made progress, and will work to define, approve an agreement to manage the river serving 40 million people in the West

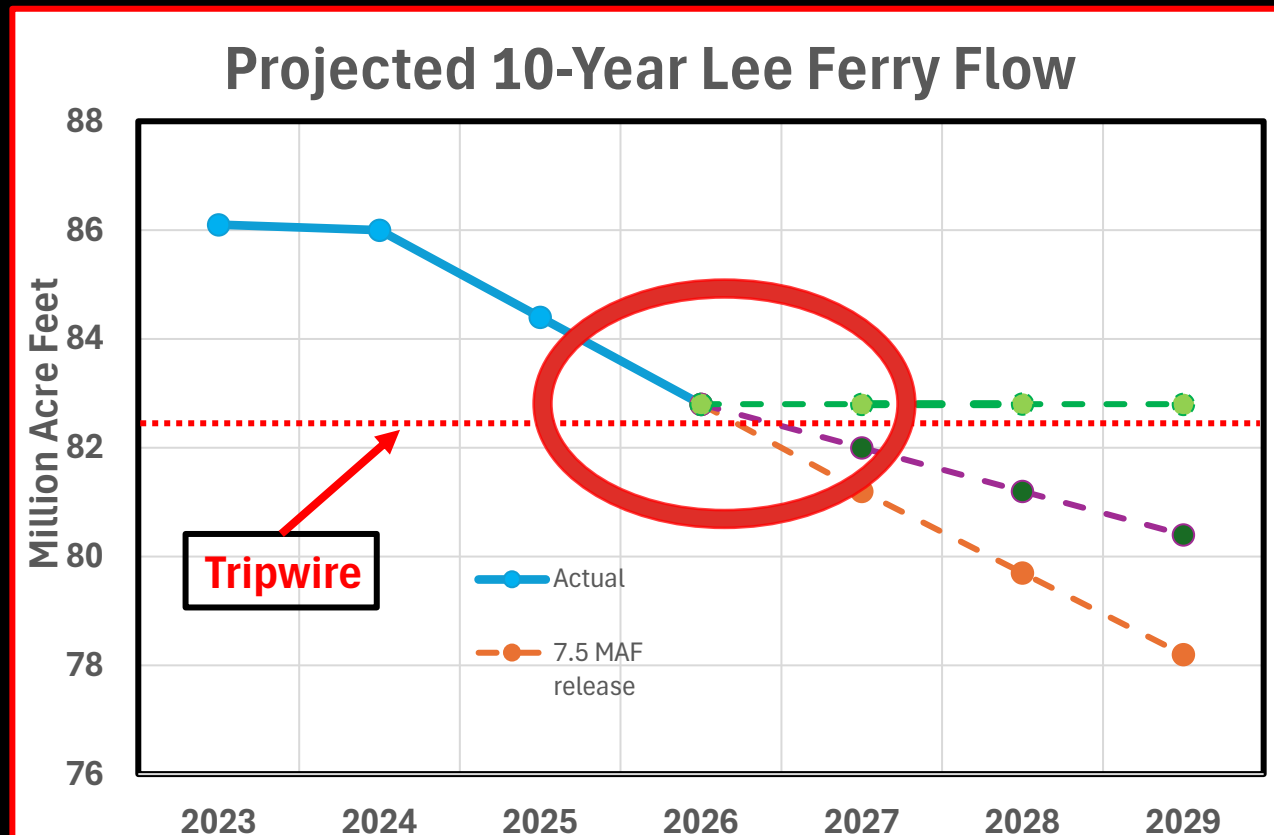
ISSUES TO ADDRESS



- Offset of evaporation in Lower Basin
- Further reductions to balance use with supply
- Releases from upstream reservoirs to help Lake Powell
- Conservation pools in both Lakes Powell and Mead
- Tribal interests
- Term of new agreement – short term or long?

LITIGATION?

- Compact requires 75 MAF + $\frac{1}{2}$ of obligation to Mexico to pass Lee Ferry every 10 years \approx 82.5 MAF
- That “tripwire” will be triggered next year - 2026
- To induce waiver of litigation, deal has to be sufficiently beneficial to all parties

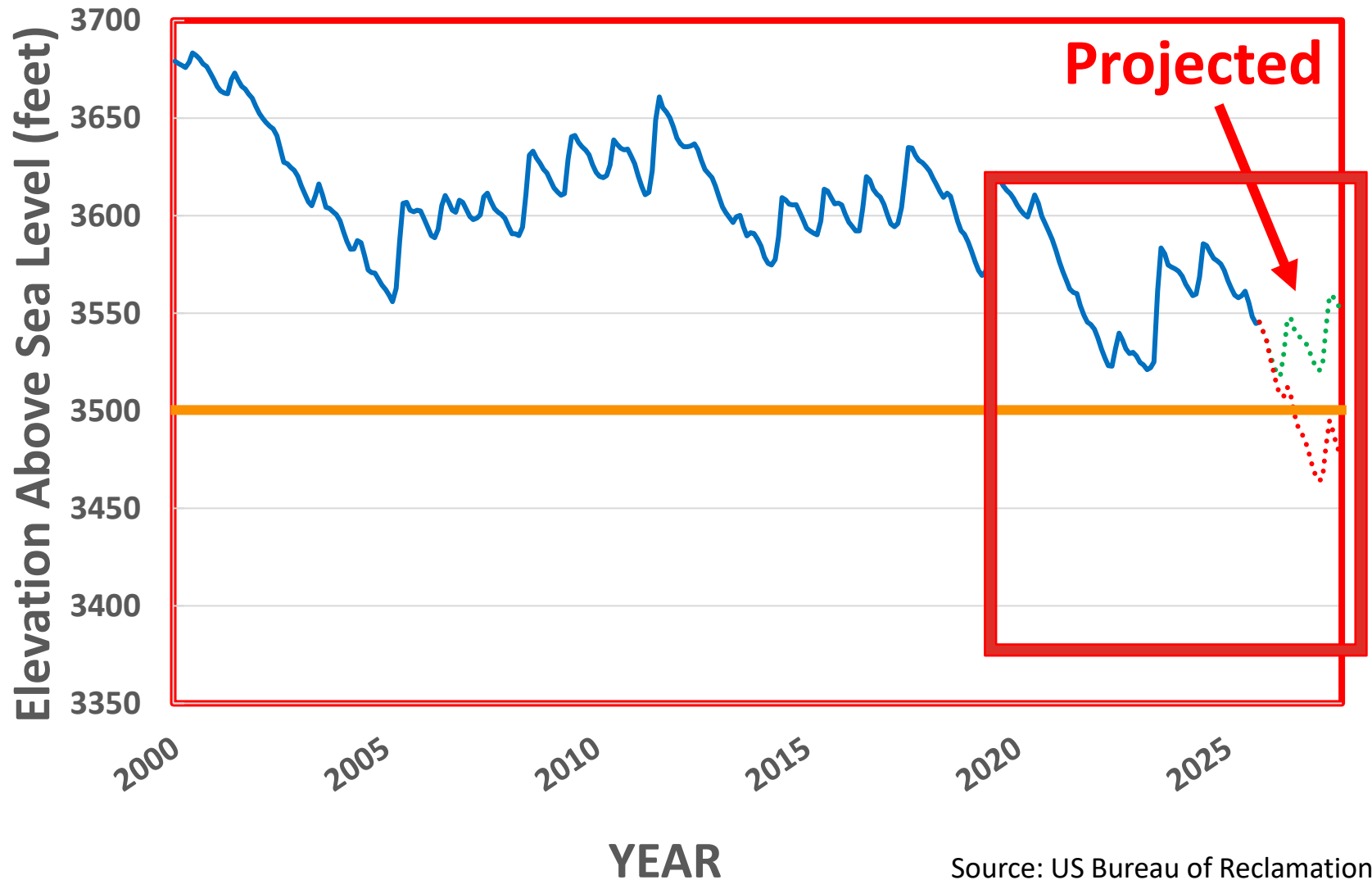


SHORT TERM ISSUES



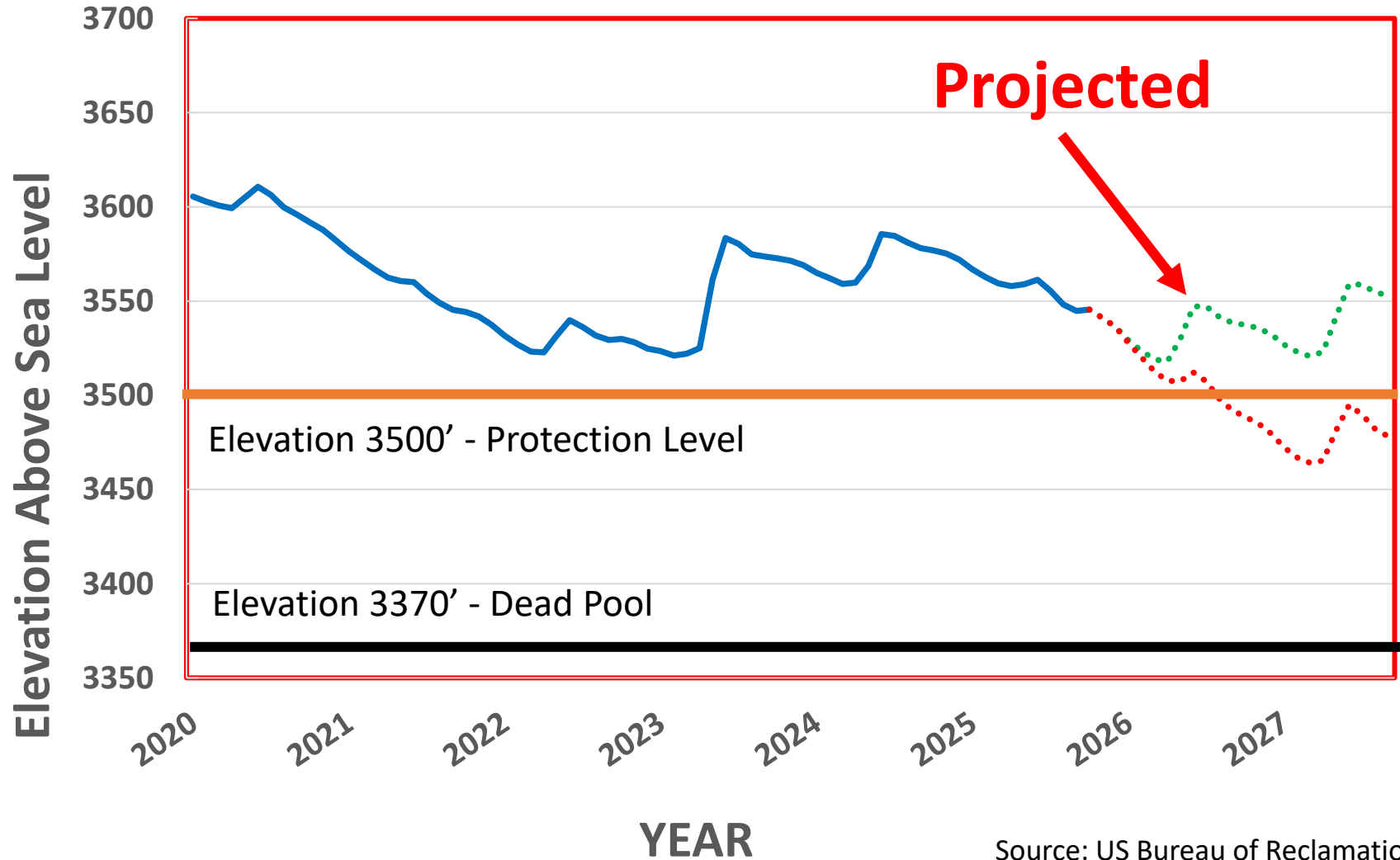
- New rules won't take effect until January 2027
- In the meantime, we're on track to reach dangerously low levels in the reservoirs next year
- If that happens, narrows options for new operations

Lake Powell Elevations 2000 - 2027



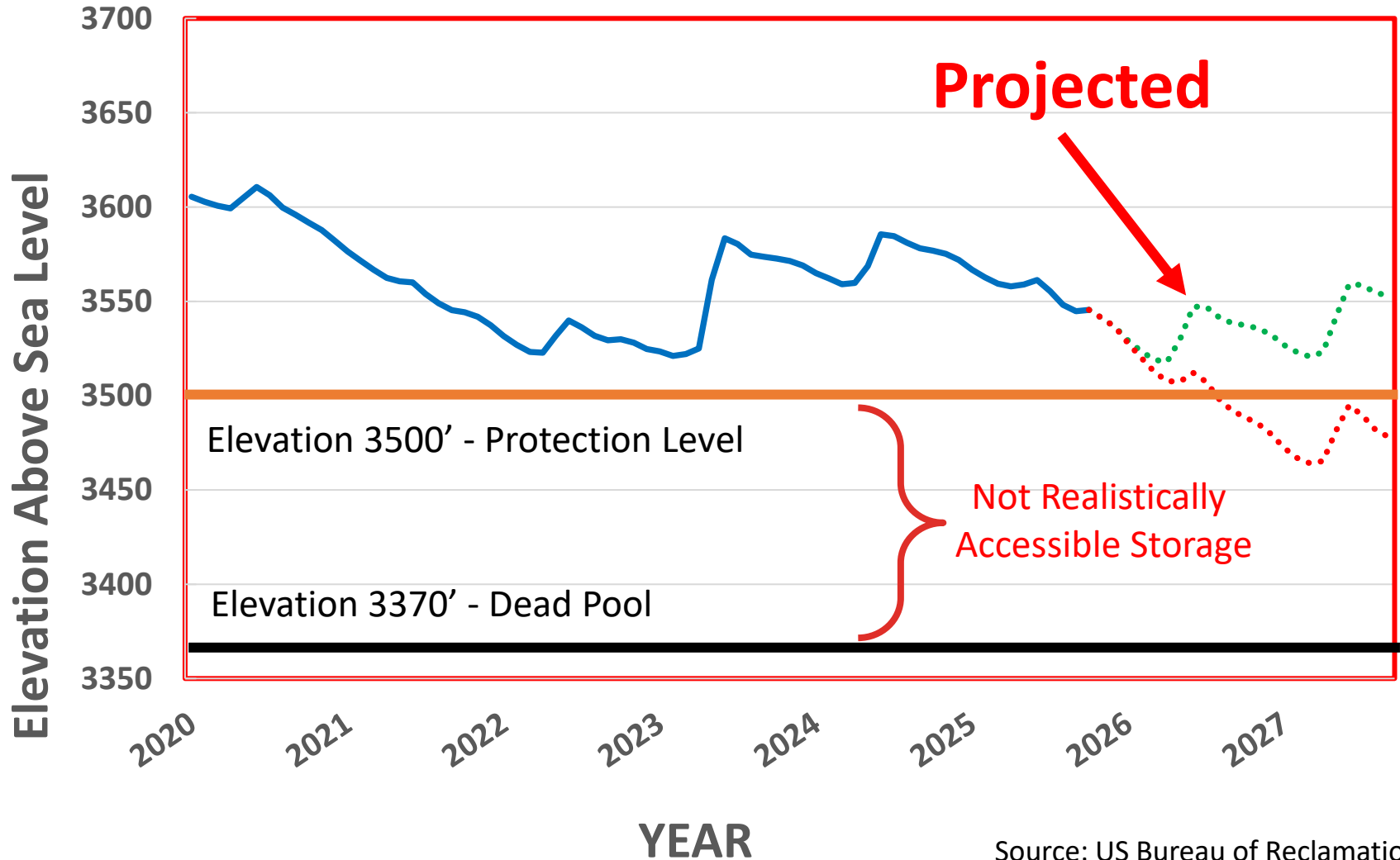
Source: US Bureau of Reclamation

Lake Powell Elevations 2020 - 2027



Source: US Bureau of Reclamation

Lake Powell Elevations 2020 - 2027



Source: US Bureau of Reclamation

IMPLICATIONS

- If we don't reduce water use now, the new guidelines will start out in crisis mode, with little choice but to require deep cuts
- No administration, state or federal, wants to see the Colorado River system fail on its watch

