



December 7, 2023

United States Bureau of Reclamation
Revised Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Near-term Colorado River
Operations
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Via Email: CRinterimops@usbr.gov

Subject: City of Escondido's and Vista Irrigation District's Comments on the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation Revised Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Near-term Colorado River Operations

Dear Bureau of Reclamation:

The City of Escondido (Escondido), and the Vista Irrigation District (VID), jointly offer this response to the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Revised Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for Near-term Colorado River Operations.

Escondido, is a California municipality located in Northern San Diego County which provides water for over 150,000 people, and the VID, a California Irrigation District which serves 135,000 people in the City of Vista and portions of Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and unincorporated areas of San Diego County, depend on a share of the region's Colorado River supplies, including 16,000 acre feet of conserved Colorado River water from the lining of the All-American Canal and its Coachella Branch that is provided under the San Luis Rey Indian Water Rights Settlement Act, Public Law 100-675, as amended (Settlement Act).

The Revised Draft SEIS analyzes two alternatives in detail:

1. The No Action Alternative describes the continued implementation of existing agreements that control operations of Glen Canyon and Hoover Dams.
2. The Proposed Action ("Lower Division Proposal"), models changes to operations for both Glen Canyon Dam and Hoover Dam. The Proposed Action includes assumptions

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for a total of 3 million acre-feet (maf) of SEIS conservation through 2026 with a minimum of 1.5 maf physically conserved by the end of calendar year 2024. Under the Proposed Action, tier-based reductions and contributions are limited to the existing 2007 Interim Guidelines, Lower Basin DCP, and Minute 323.

Escondido and VID agree with and appreciate Reclamation's decision to designate the Lower Division Proposal as the Proposed Action and eliminate from its detailed examination Action Alternatives 1 and 2 from its prior draft SEIS. (Revised Draft SEIS, Appendix C.)

As pointed out "based on the updated hydrology, the Proposed Action would provide additional risk reduction compared with Action Alternatives 1 and 2, while implementing similar flow reductions; therefore, Action Alternatives 1 and 2 were eliminated from detailed analysis in this revised Draft SEIS." (Revised Draft SEIS, Section 2.8.10.)

As set forth in their August 10, 2023 Comments on the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Notice To Solicit Comments and Hold Public Scoping Meetings on the Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead, Escondido and VID were concerned that Reclamation's consideration of Action Alternatives 1 and 2 might have resulted in Reclamation taking actions mandating reductions of historic established water rights.

As described in detail in our August 10, 2023 Comments, the 16,000-acre feet of conserved Colorado River water provided To Escondido, VID and five Indian Bands the under the Settlement Act is not subject to mandatory reduction by Reclamation because it has been allocated by a Settlement, approved by Congress, signed by the Secretary of the Interior, and upheld in the United States District Court.

In contrast, the revised Draft SEIS emphasizes that the "Proposed Action conservation volumes are modeling assumptions, do not represent mandatory shortages, and in no way commit specific water users to these reductions in use." (Revised Draft SEIS, Table 3-3 Lower Division States' SEIS Conservation by State, Proposed Action (2023–2026) note 1.)

Under the circumstances, Escondido and VID also appreciate that, in determining which alternatives to eliminate, Reclamation took into account that certain alternatives: "(1) would not fully meet the purpose and need (see **Section 1.3**); (2) are covered by the range of the alternatives; or (3) are infeasible or inconsistent with the basic policy objectives for Colorado River operations, **including consistency with applicable federal laws.**" (Revised Draft SEIS, Section 2.8) [Emphasis added.]

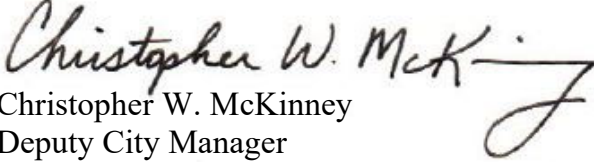
The San Luis Rey Settlement facilitated by the Settlement Act is a good example of local and tribal governments working with the federal government to make water available through infrastructure improvement and conservation measures.


Escondido and VID recommend that Reclamation consider integrating into the Final SEIS for Near-term Colorado River Operations and the Development of Post-2026 Operational

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Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead the implementation of similar relationships involving multi-party cooperation and conservation measures.

Respectfully submitted,


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