

Letter #: 1080
Date Received: 12/16/2022
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Subject: I support the 3588 plan for the Proposed SEIS Guidelines

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Dear Project Manager:

As a native New Mexican I enjoy recreating on public lands and waters, and as you all know water is in short supply in New Mexico. So I recognize the importance of the reservoirs and dams in the Colorado River Basin for providing a reliable source of water and energy. I am writing to provide feedback for the Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to the Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell.

I believe the Bureau of Reclamation needs to take action due to declining water levels in reservoirs. I believe BOR needs to protect the future of recreation and motorized access on the reservoirs. I have concerns that if BOR adopts a plan that doesn't stabilize the reservoirs at a higher level, then National Park Service might choose to close and decommission recreation infrastructure.

We are already starting to see unthinkable impacts to recreation because of the lack of viable guidelines for addressing shortages in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. BOR may need to take unprecedented actions in order to preserve water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. I support the BlueRibbon Coalition's Path to 3588' Plan as it will address low water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. This plan is a common sense path that balances the needs of all the water users in the basin. By adjusting outflows against actual inflows and current lake levels in the reservoirs, this plan creates a sustainable path forward for adaptively managing these reservoirs instead of managing them headlong into a crisis. I oppose BOR's current path of liquidating these reservoirs to the point of crisis. The substantial pain at the end of the path BOR is currently on will be far worse than the relatively minor temporary pain required now to correct course.

As the Bureau of Reclamation creates alternatives, BOR needs to strongly consider the needs of recreational users and balance these needs along with the interests of other water users. Outdoor recreation generates billions of dollars each year, sustaining many local economies. These communities rely on continued recreation access to Lake Powell and Lake Mead for continued economic growth. These communities, which include neighboring Tribal Nations, would suffer significant losses if recreation is lost or decreased due to water elevation levels. As launch ramps and marinas close due to water levels, businesses are hurt and economic losses impact the entire region surrounding the Lake. NPS estimates that both Lake Mead and Lake Powell produce almost \$500 million in direct economic impact to gateway communities, and we estimate that the broader impact is measured in billions. This economic impact dwarfs the economic impact created by power. By developing a "recreation alternative" BOR will also have a plan that allows for better water level buffers that are needed to prevent reaching the points of lost power generation capacity and/or dead pool.

I hope BOR will include analysis of the economic importance of recreation in addition to feedback on power generation and water deliveries. Because there are so many variables affecting the lake's elevation such as precipitation, snowpack, runoff, release volumes, and other reservoir elevations the Bureau needs to consider changing the "target" elevation. In the long run, I think 3588 feet is a better target elevation for Lake Powell and an elevation between 1050 and 1075 is a better elevation for Lake Mead to meet the demand for

recreation on the lake in a way that also protects the power generation and water right interests.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL BUDAGHER

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]