

Letter #: 804
Date Received: 12/19/2022
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Organizations:
Subject: Proposed SEIS Guidelines - Lks Powell & Mead

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Dear Project Manager:

I enjoy recreating on public lands and waters. I also 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 and Lake Mead. I am also providing comments regarding the National Park Service's (NPS) proposed concepts for addressing low water levels on Lake Mead. I recognize that this message is being sent to both agencies, because even though each agency is conducting a separate planning process, the two plans are directly interrelated.

I believe the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) needs to take action due to declining water levels in reservoirs. I encourage the BOR and the NPS to consider the interests of recreationists on Lake Mead and Lake Powell. I believe BOR and NPS need to protect the future of recreation and motorized access on the reservoirs. If NPS chooses to not build new infrastructure or maintain current resources based on low water levels, it could jeopardize or completely eliminate the recreational experience of over 7 million visitors to Lake Mead and 4 million visitors to Lake Powell.

BOR may need to take unprecedented actions in order to preserve water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. I support the Blue Ribbon Coalition's (BRC) 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 Lake Mead and Lake Powell, this plan creates a sustainable path forward for adaptively managing these reservoirs instead of managing them headlong into a crisis (the "run to failure" option). I oppose BOR's current path of liquidating these reservoirs to the point of crisis. The substantial pain at the end of the "run to failure" path BOR is currently on will be far worse than the temporary pain required now to correct course.

As the alternatives are created, 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 viability. These communities, which include neighboring tribal nations, would suffer significant losses if recreation is lost or decreased due to the continued drawdown of these reservoirs. As launch ramps and marinas close due to lowering water levels, businesses are hurt and economic losses impact the entire region surrounding the lakes. NPS estimates that both Lake Mead and Lake Powell produce almost \$500 million in direct economic impact to gateway communities, and BRC estimates that the broader impact is measured in billions. This economic impact dwarfs the economic impact created by power generation. 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 conditions.

Recreationists are already starting to see unthinkable impacts to recreation because of the lack of viable guidelines for addressing shortages in Lakes Powell and Mead. Regarding Lake Mead, the NPS is considering

the closure of each major marina on Lake Mead.

I do not support any of the proposals identified in Concept 3 of the NPS plan that would remove all infrastructure and facilities. Concept 3 completely ignores the current and future needs of the public and should not be considered. However, NPS says this alternative in the planning process is necessary in the case that the BOR adopts a plan for managing lake levels that doesn't do what is necessary to keep both lakes at sustainable levels. I strongly support any concept proposed by NPS that makes the necessary adaptations to keep as many facilities open to serve as many members of the public as possible.

I want BOR and NPS 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 BOR 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 downstream water interests.

Sincerely,

Scott Taylor

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