Attachment E

2026 Drought Response Operations Plan

Operations at Navajo Reservoir

1. Navajo Reservoir Operations Without Drought Response

Navajo Reservoir Operations are guided by the Record of Decision (ROD) for Navajo Reservoir, Navajo Unit which implements the operating criteria contained in the Preferred Alternative of the 2006 Navajo Reservoir Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service transmitted to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) the Final Biological Opinion for Navajo Reservoir Operations on January 5, 2006, which outlined the intent for Reclamation through the proposed operations in the preferred alternative to mimic the San Juan River's natural hydrograph downstream from its confluence with the Animas River.

The ROD provides for potential refinement of the flow recommendations based on relevant new information that may be gained over time through an adaptive management process. The range of downstream releases specified in the Navajo Reservoir Operations ROD can vary from 250 to 5,000 cfs.

The Navajo Dam Operating Procedures for implementing the operating criteria are evaluated and revised as needed. The most recent operating procedures were adopted by the SJRIP and Reclamation in 2018. The Revised Operating Procedures document prescribe a year-round target baseflow in the San Juan of 500 to 1000 cfs in the critical habitat reach (from Farmington, NM to Lake Powell).

The flow recommendations recommend mimicry of a natural hydrograph in terms of flow magnitude, duration, and frequency during the spring runoff period. Duration and frequency minimums are specified in the Flow Recommendations document and are based on modeling of hydrology from 1928 to 1993. A spring peak release is considered every year to meet recommended flow targets in the critical habitat reach, based on water availability forecasts, projected contract water use, and releases to meet the target baseflow. A spring peak release calls for 5,000 cfs of water to be released continuously, over a period varying from 21 to 60 days.

The End of Water Year Storage Target (EWYST) is one of two target reservoir elevations on September 30th of each year. The lower EWYST, 6,050 ft, is used for the calculation of forecast available water for a spring peak release to benefit endangered fish and critical habitat. If there is not enough available water for a spring peak release, or after the spring peak release occurs, then the EWYST changes to 6,063 ft for the calculation of Excess Water (Excess Water). If there is water in the reservoir above 6,063 ft, that water is considered Excess Water. If Excess Water is available in a given year, it could be

released based on a request from the SJRIP to meet a variety of goals of the SJRIP.

Spring Peak Releases and Excess Water are both examples of water which release is timed to benefit the goals of the SJRIP.

In case of severe drought with anticipated shortages to the Navajo Reservoir water users, the ROD allows for consideration of a temporary revision to the spring peak release criteria or lowering of baseflow targets in the critical habitat reach.

2. Current Hydrology

As of April 7, 2026, Navajo Reservoir is at 6,036.5 ft of elevation, or 1,024 kaf of live storage (62% of live capacity) and 398 kaf of active storage (39% of active capacity).

The April modified unregulated inflow forecast for Navajo Reservoir in water year 2026 ranges from a minimum probable of 79 thousand acre-feet (kaf) (13 percent of average to a maximum probable of 360 kaf (57 percent of average) with the most probable forecast for water year 2026 of 173 kaf (28 percent of average). The inflow forecast for the minimum probable is the 2nd lowest since water year 1991 and is the 3rd lowest under the most probable. There is a 10 percent chance that inflows could be higher than the current maximum probable forecast and a 10 percent chance that inflows could be lower than the minimum probable forecast.

3. Navajo Reservoir Operations without Drought Response during Plan year

Based on the April 2026 most probable forecast of 173 kaf modified unregulated inflow for water year 2026, the Colorado River Mid-term Modeling System 24-Month Study (24-Month Study) projects Navajo Reservoir elevation will end water year 2026 near 6,010.4 feet with approximately 784 kaf in live storage (48 percent of live capacity), or 158 kaf in active storage (15 percent of active capacity). The total live capacity at Navajo Reservoir is 1,647,940 acre-feet. The active capacity at Navajo Reservoir is above elevation 5990 ft, and totals 1,021,910 acre-feet. Below the elevation of 5990 ft, contract deliveries can no longer be made.

Note that projections of elevation and storage for water year 2026 have considerable uncertainty at this point in the season. Projections of end of water year 2026 Navajo elevations using the April 2026 24-Month Study Minimum Probable (drier hydrology) and Maximum Probable (wetter hydrology) inflow forecasts are 5,991.9 feet (39 percent of live capacity, 1 percent of active capacity) and 6,029.8 feet (58 percent of live capacity, 32 percent of active capacity), respectively (Figure 1). Under these scenarios, there is a 10 percent chance that inflows will be higher, resulting in higher elevation, and 10 percent chance that inflows will be lower, resulting in lower elevation.

Based on the current storage and the April 2026 inflow forecast, and pursuant to the ROD

for the Navajo Unit, the available water calculated for water year 2026 is insufficient for a spring peak release as recommended by the SJRIP under all three forecasts. The release throughout water year 2026 will be the minimum required to maintain the minimum downstream target baseflow as specified in the ROD and is likely to range between 250 cfs and 1,500 cfs.

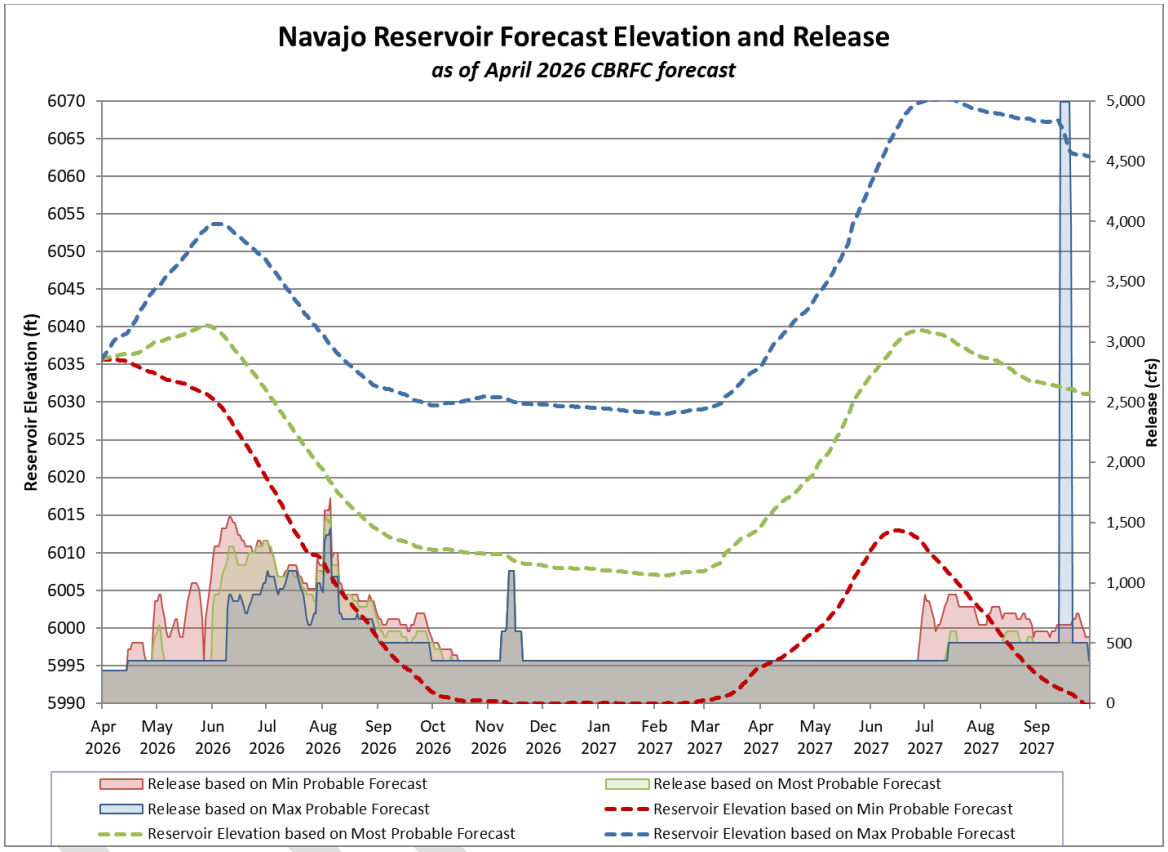

Figure 1.

4. Navajo Reservoir Drought Response Operations

Based on probabilistic modeling using the operational model used for the San Juan portion of the 24-Month Study with the Ensemble Streamflow Prediction (ESP) traces, there is a 0% risk of shortage in Water Year 2026, based on 0 of 30 traces that fall into inactive storage under normal operations without DROA.

a. Releases

No Drought Response Operations Release is contemplated for Water Year 2026.

b. Recovery

No releases have been made from Navajo Reservoir to date pursuant to DROA. Therefore, no recovery is necessary as of April 1, 2026.

Operational Flexibilities for Drought Response Recovery

a. Recovery Tools Under the Navajo Reservoir Operations:

i. Recovery of the Cumulative Volume of the Drought Response Operation Release

Recovery of the total Drought Response Operations volume can occur in one operation, or over several operations with partial recovery. The following are examples of potential operations that result in recovery. All recovery scenarios are dependent upon hydrological conditions. Recovery would not occur under any of the described scenarios if below-average hydrology persists in future years. Any reduction in Operations without Drought Response may count towards recovery. It should be noted that some of these scenarios for recovery may have an impact on the volume, frequency and duration of releases as specified in the Revised Operating Procedures document.

The variables used in the equations for these scenarios are as follows:

Dtot. = Total Drought Response Operations volume released in prior release(s)

Do = Drought Response Operations volume recovered under any of these recovery scenarios. If Do is less than or equal to zero, no Drought Response Operations volume is recovered.

Drem= Remaining Drought Response Operations Volume to be Recovered = Dtot – ∑ Doi (i=1..n, representing total number of events that have resulted in the recovery of Drought Response Operations releases). Once Drem is reduced to zero, full recovery has occurred.

S6063 = Storage volume at 6063 ft

S6085 = Storage volume at 6085 ft (maximum active storage)

Sfcm = Maximum flood control storage as defined by the USACE water control manual, based on forecast inflows and date.

S = Observed storage

AW = Available Water =Projected available water volume for a spring peak release

SPR= minimum volume required to make a spring peak release

SPRING OPERATIONS: A spring peak release (Spring Peak) from Navajo Reservoir, as recommended and described by the SJRIP, will occur when, after accounting for forecast inflows, regular releases and contract uses, and evaporation, it is projected that there will be enough Available Water over the lower EWYST of 6050 ft to make a spring peak release for the recommended duration. There is opportunity for partial or full Drought Response Operations recovery under this scenario. The equation below illustrates how such recovery would be calculated.

Do =AW+ Drem -SPR

FALL OPERATIONS: If the Excess Water is available, withholding some, or all of that Excess Water could result in partial or full Drought Response Operations recovery. If Excess Water is not available, there could still be a potential for partial recovery depending on the storage in the reservoir. The equation below illustrates how such recovery would be calculated.

Do = S + Drem - S6063

FLOOD CONTROL OPERATIONS: The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) defines variable flood control space to allow for forecast inflows without spilling during runoff season. This flood control space is based on the inflow forecast and day of the year. Partial or full Drought Response Operations recovery could occur if the difference between the maximum flood control storage volume and the actual storage is less than or equal to Drem. The equation below illustrates how such recovery would be calculated.

Do = S+ Drem - Sfcm

Similarly, partial or full Drought Response Operations recovery could occur if the difference between the top of active storage and the actual storage is less than or equal to Drem.

Do = S+ Drem – S6085

There are four elevation targets, which, if reached, will "recover" all prior Drought Response Operation releases. These elevation targets are also used in the previous section for recovery by tracking volumes.

- September 30th: 6063 ft or higher

- September 30th: 6050 ft or higher – Recovery complete (only if a spring peak release was made that calendar year).

- January 1st – July 15th: If the reservoir elevation intersects the maximum flood control elevation allowed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at any point in this timeframe.

- Jan 1st – Dec 31st: 6085 ft

5. Contracts

Existing water supply contracts and agreements at Navajo Reservoir are described below. Any future contracts which become executed will be described here. Water supply contracts and agreements are not impaired by any Drought Response Operations because the water under contract is considered unavailable under DROA.

Navajo Reservoir contracted water volumes listed below represent the full allocation of water contract:

i. Williams Gas Processing (expires 3/31/28): 50 af/yr.

ii. Navajo Nation Settlement Contract (no expiration): 508,000 af/yr for NIIP which includes 22,650 af/yr of diversion (20,780 af/yr of depletion) for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

iii. Jicarilla Apache Nation Settlement Contract (no expiration): not to exceed 33,500 af/yr diversion (25,500 af/yr of depletion) from the Navajo Reservoir Supply for use by the Nation or for subcontracting outside the reservation, in accordance with the Jicarilla Apache Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 1992.

iv. Hammond Conservancy District Contract (no expiration): 23,000 af/yr of depletion.

Shortages to contracts at Navajo Reservoir will be handled according to the provisions of Public Law No. 87-483, as amended by Public Law No. 111-11.

6. Coordination

Navajo Unit stakeholder coordination meetings are held three times annually in January, April, and August. Operational plans are presented for comment and feedback at these meetings. Additionally, Reclamation reaches out to stakeholders as needed for input and coordination on operations outside of regularly scheduled meetings.

There is a formal process for coordination between Reclamation and the SJRIP on spring peak releases from Navajo Reservoir. Reclamation provides an available water calculation by April 1st to the SJRIP, and a recommendation for the size and shape of a

spring peak release is made by mid-April. This process can also be used for any Drought Response Operation that may occur as a spring peak. Outside of the spring, direct coordination between Reclamation and the SJRIP is conducted through updates at Biology Committee and Coordination Committee meetings, which are scheduled regularly throughout the year. Additional meetings with the SJRIP will be conducted as needed with each Drought Response Operation from Navajo Reservoir.

7. Accounting

No releases have been made from Navajo Reservoir to date pursuant to DROA. Therefore, no accounting or recovery has been necessary as of April 1, 2026.

Accounting for current DROA releases and recovery at Navajo can be found here:

https://www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/documents/dcp/DROA/DROSummarySheet.pdf