



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
P.O. Box 61470  
Boulder City, NV 89006-1470

IN REPLY REFER TO:

LCB-4220  
2.2.4.23

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Brenda Burman  
General Manager  
Central Arizona Water Conservation District  
P.O. Box 43020  
Phoenix, AZ 85080-3020

Subject: Approval of Calendar Year (CY) 2026 Colorado River Water Diversion – Central Arizona Water Conservation District (CAWCD)

Dear Ms. Burman:

The Bureau of Reclamation received CAWCD's CY 2026 Colorado River water diversion estimate, in which CAWCD requests approval to divert up to 888,498 acre-feet (AF) in CY 2026. CAWCD's diversion request incorporates the diversion of 2,033 for delivery to the Town of Queen Creek (Queen Creek) pursuant to Reclamation Wheeling Contract No. 20-XX-30-W0691 (Reclamation Wheeling Contract). In accordance with Title 43, Code of Federal Regulations Part 417 (Part 417), this letter provides CAWCD with notice of my determination regarding CAWCD's proposed diversion and beneficial use of Colorado River water for CY 2026.

Pursuant to Contract No. 14-06-W-245, as amended and supplemented, CAWCD is entitled to divert the balance of Arizona's 2.8 million AF basic apportionment not consumed by equal and higher priority Arizona entitlement holders.

On August 15, 2025, Reclamation released its Colorado River Basin August 2025 24-Month Study,<sup>1</sup> which projects Lake Mead's most probable elevation on January 1, 2026, to be 1,055.88 feet. In its letter dated August 21, 2025, Reclamation announced that, in accordance with the 2007 Interim Guidelines,<sup>2</sup> Lake Mead and the lower Colorado River will operate in a Tier 1 Shortage Condition in CY 2026. In addition, the 2019 *Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan Agreement* (LB DCP Agreement) will also govern the operation of Lake Mead for CY 2026. In accordance with Section XI.G.2.D.1.a of the 2007 Interim Guidelines, 2.48 million AF is apportioned for consumptive use in the state of Arizona in CY 2026 (a reduction of 320,000 AF from its 2.8 million AF basic apportionment). Additionally, in

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/24mo/>.

<sup>2</sup> Referring to *Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead* dated December 13, 2007.

accordance with Section III.B.1.a of Exhibit 1 to the LB DCP Agreement,<sup>3</sup> the state of Arizona will be required to make DCP Contributions in the total amount of 192,000 AF in CY 2026.

Consistent with the Arizona mainstream Colorado River water priority system, there are no reductions to the water supply available to first, second and third priority entitlement holders for CY 2026. As noted in Reclamation's August 21 letter, the Arizona fourth priority Colorado River water available supply for CY 2026 is 1,150,354 AF on a consumptive use basis. Of this amount, 113,940 AF,<sup>4</sup> on a diversion basis, is available for distribution among mainstream fourth priority entitlement holders for use in CY 2026 in accordance with the state of Arizona's August 6, 2009, Arizona Shortage Sharing Recommendation<sup>5</sup> and the "pool" approach described by letter dated January 25, 2021.<sup>6</sup> Reclamation has determined that the available Arizona mainstream fourth priority water supply is sufficient to satisfy all initial on-river mainstream water orders for CY 2026. However, given the limited available supply, requests for modifications to increase approved water order amounts will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure approved volumes do not collectively exceed the 113,940 AF of available supply. Arizona fifth priority and/or sixth priority entitlements will not be available for diversion in CY 2026.

Based upon the approved water orders of equal and higher priority Arizona entitlement holders, the Shortage Condition determination, a review of the CY 2026 diversion estimate provided by CAWCD, the information gathered during Reclamation's Part 417 consultation, and other pertinent information, I approve the diversion of up to 808,140 AF of Colorado River water by CAWCD during CY 2026, of which up to 2,033 AF may be diverted on behalf of Queen Creek pursuant to the Reclamation Wheeling Contract. I also approve CAWCD to divert any additional unused Arizona basic apportionment of Colorado River water as reflected on Reclamation's website,<sup>7</sup> to the extent such water becomes available during CY 2026.

The table on the following page provides the factors used to develop CAWCD's approved diversion for CY 2026.

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<sup>3</sup> Referring to *Lower Basin Drought Contingency Operations*. Available at:

<https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/dcpdocs/Attachment-B-Exhibit-1-LB-Drought-Operations.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> The P4(i) pool will receive 9.90% of the Arizona fourth priority Colorado River water available for CY 2026, calculated as 164,652 AF divided by 1,662,354 which is the difference between Arizona's 2,800,000 AF basic apportionment and the average historical consumptive use by Arizona first, second, and third priority users (1,137,646 AF). The average historical consumptive use by Arizona first, second, and third priority users is based on the four highest years of consumptive use during the five-year period from 2020-2024.

<sup>5</sup> Available at: [https://new.azwater.gov/sites/default/files/8-6-2009\\_ADWR\\_Shortage\\_%20ecommendation.pdf](https://new.azwater.gov/sites/default/files/8-6-2009_ADWR_Shortage_%20ecommendation.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Available at: [https://new.azwater.gov/sites/default/files/01.25.21\\_ADWR\\_CAWCD\\_shortage\\_recommendationLetter.pdf](https://new.azwater.gov/sites/default/files/01.25.21_ADWR_CAWCD_shortage_recommendationLetter.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/hourly/forecast.pdf>.

<b>Water Budget Item</b>	<b>Amount (AF)</b>
Arizona Basic Apportionment	2,800,000
Reduction to Arizona Basic Apportionment for Tier 1 Shortage Condition (2007 Interim Guidelines)	(320,000)
Reduction to Arizona Basic Apportionment for DCP Contributions (2019 LB DCP Agreement) <sup>8</sup>	(192,000)
Estimated Uses by Equal and Higher Priority Arizona Entitlement Holders <sup>9</sup>	(1,170,528)
System Conservation Water – City of Bullhead City <sup>10</sup>	(3,052)
System Conservation Water – CAP Subcontractors <sup>11</sup>	(98,800)
System Conservation Water – Cathcarts <sup>12</sup>	(61)
System Conservation Water – Cibola Valley Irrigation and Drainage District (I.D.D) <sup>13</sup>	(2,329)
System Conservation Water – Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation <sup>14</sup>	(13,933)
System Conservation Water – Gila River Indian Community <sup>15</sup>	(75,363)
System Conservation Water – Hopi Tribe <sup>16</sup>	(3,059)
System Conservation Water – Matador Farms, LLC <sup>17</sup>	(3,240)
System Conservation Water – Mohave Valley I.D.D. <sup>18</sup>	(14,184)
System Conservation Water – San Carlos Apache Tribe <sup>19</sup>	(23,451)
System Conservation Water – Yuma Mesa I.D.D. <sup>20</sup>	(23,893)
System Conservation Water – Reclamation <sup>21</sup>	(50,000)
<b>Approved Diversion of CAP Project Water<sup>22</sup></b>	<b>806,107</b>
Approved Diversion of Non-Project Mainstream Water <sup>23</sup>	2,033
<b>Total CAWCD Approved Colorado River Water Diversion at Mark Wilmer Pumping Plant</b>	<b>808,140</b>

<sup>8</sup> CAWCD intends to make the required DCP Contribution on behalf of the state of Arizona using one or more of the methods defined in Section II of LBOps.

<sup>9</sup> Includes 1,652 AF of consumptive use by Cibola Island, lands outside Present Perfected Right No. 7, Martinez Lake cabin sites, and Yuma-area users outside of district boundaries.

<sup>10</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 15-XX-30-W0587, as amended.

<sup>11</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created by CAP Subcontractors pursuant to executed SCIA's.

<sup>12</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 23-XX-30-W0776, as amended.

<sup>13</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 23-XX-30-W0771, as amended.

<sup>14</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 23-XX-30-W0750, as amended.

<sup>15</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA Nos. 23-XX-30-W820, as amended; 24-XX-30-W0832, 24-XX-30-W0833, 24-XX-30-W0834, and/or 25-XX-30-W0847.

<sup>16</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 23-XX-30-W0779, as amended.

<sup>17</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 24-XX-30-W0828, as amended.

<sup>18</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 23-XX-30-W0770, as amended.

<sup>19</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 24-XX-30-W0829.

<sup>20</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water that will be created pursuant to SCIA No. 23-XX-30-W0769, as amended.

<sup>21</sup> The estimated amount of System Conservation Water to be created by additional pumping from the 242 Well Field Expansion Project pursuant to Letter Agreement No. 16-XX-30-W0603, Revision No. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Amount shown includes 72,000 AF of Arizona third priority Colorado River water to be diverted by CAWCD and delivered via the CAP to fulfill water rights settlements pursuant to the Stipulated Judgment and the Stipulation for Judgment (including any exhibits to those documents) entered on November 21, 2007, in the United States District Court for the District of Arizona in the consolidated civil action styled *Central Arizona Water Conservation District v. United States, et al.*, and numbered CIV 95-625-TUC-WDB (EHC) and CIV 95-1720-PHX-EHC.

<sup>23</sup> Amount shown includes Queen Creek's Mainstream Water Entitlement (2,033.01 AF).

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. The data on Reclamation's website are provisional until final records are issued. Any diversions made as a result of the values on the website are at CAWCD's own risk.
2. All available Colorado River water within Arizona has been approved for beneficial use within the state. In cases where approvals to higher priority entitlement holders are less than their Colorado River entitlements, the approvals may be increased to their full entitlements.
3. Final accounting records published by Reclamation may differ from the provisional data on the website.
4. Reclamation may at any time rescind this approval to divert unused Arizona apportionment of Colorado River water.

Reclamation acknowledges that CAWCD has an approved plan to create up to 50,000 AF of Extraordinary Conservation Intentionally Created Surplus (EC ICS) during CY 2026. The actual amount of EC ICS creation by CAWCD in CY 2026 is subject to verification by Reclamation and the limits set forth in Section IV.B and Section IV.C of Exhibit 1 to the LB DCP Agreement and will be based on final accounting. Should CAWCD elect to take delivery of ICS during CY 2026, CAWCD is required to request such delivery through means of a revised water order.

Reclamation would like to highlight that, in accordance with the *Inadvertent Overrun and Payback Policy*,<sup>24</sup> **accumulations of inadvertent overruns are not permitted in CY 2026 and are suspended as long as a Shortage Condition is in effect.** To assist entitlement holders in monitoring their Colorado River water use to ensure they remain within available quantities, Reclamation will project CY 2026 diversions and consumptive use of Colorado River water during CY 2026 and will make these projections available daily on Reclamation's website beginning in January 2026. Reclamation encourages Colorado River water entitlement holders to use the projections to adjust diversions to remain within their Reclamation-approved annual Colorado River water order.

Thank you for submitting CAWCD's diversion estimate for CY 2026. Should you have questions, please contact Kerim Dickson, Team Lead, Water Accounting and Verification Group, at (725) 232-6443 or [kdickson@usbr.gov](mailto:kdickson@usbr.gov). Individuals who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunication relay services.

Sincerely,

Genevieve R. Johnson  
Acting Regional Director

cc: See next page.

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<sup>24</sup> Available at: <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/IOPP.pdf>.

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