

LC-2502  
ENV 6.00

Subject: Invitation Soliciting Comments and Announcing Public Hearings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Colorado River Interim Surplus Criteria

Dear Interested Reader:

The Bureau of Reclamation has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that analyses potential environmental impacts of adopting specific interim criteria under which surplus water conditions may be declared in the Lower Colorado River Basin during an interim period that would extend through 2015.

The interim surplus criteria would establish specific criteria to assist the Secretary of the Interior's (Secretary) annual decision making for determining surplus conditions. They would also afford Lower Division states users, who have contracted for surplus water, a greater degree of predictability about its annual availability.

The Secretary currently makes the annual determination of water supply conditions in consultation with the Basin States, Indian Tribes and other Parties, as required by Federal law, also known as the "Law of the River." By considering various factors, including the amount of water in storage and the predicted natural runoff, the Secretary determines if there is sufficient water available in a single year to provide Arizona, California and Nevada water users more than their basic 7.5 million acre-foot entitlement for consumptive use. If the determination is made that this water is available, the Secretary can make it available to users in these three states as "surplus" water.

The DEIS presents four possible alternatives for implementation, plus a "no action" alternative. The DEIS does not include a preferred alternative. The four potential alternatives are: a "Flood Control Alternative," which would provide surplus water only when flood control releases from Lake Mead are needed, based on the current criteria for making such releases; the "Six States Alternative" and "California Alternative," both of which specify various Lake Mead water surface elevations to be used as "triggers" to indicate when surplus conditions exist; and the "Shortage Protection Alternative," which would permit surplus conditions to be determined above a specific elevation positioned to ensure enough water remains in Lake Mead to provide a one-year water supply to Arizona, California, Nevada, and Mexico, and to protect against dropping the lake's water level below a specified elevation.

Four public hearings will be conducted to allow interested individuals and organizations to provide oral and written comments on the draft EIS. The meeting times and locations are:

- August 3, Meeting Room 1 on Level 3, Terminal 4, Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, Phoenix, Arizona, at 7 p.m.;
- August 8, Big Bear Room, Doubletree Hotel, 222 N. Vineyard Ave., Ontario, CA, at 7 p.m.;
- August 10, Jazz Room, Salt Lake City International Airport, 765 Terminal Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah, at 7 p.m.; and
- August 15, Comfort Dental Conference Room, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, 3720 Howard Hughes Parkway, Las Vegas, NV, at 7 p.m.

On August 15, Reclamation will also conduct a hydrologic modeling meeting at the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce building, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. At this meeting, Reclamation will discuss and answer questions about the engineering and other detailed data that was completed in preparation of this draft EIS.

- August 15, Comfort Dental Conference Room, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, 3720 Howard Hughes Parkway, Las Vegas, NV, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The DEIS is available on the Internet at <http://www.lc.usbr.gov> and <http://www.uc.usbr.gov>. Copies (including compact disks) of the DEIS are also available upon written request to the following address: Ms. Janet Steele, Attention BCOO-4601, PO Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-1470, Telephone: (702) 293-8551, or by fax at (702) 293-8042.

Written comments are requested by September 8, 2000, and should be sent to Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region, Attention: Jayne Harkins (LC-4600), Bureau of Reclamation, P.O. Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-1470. Comments can also be faxed to Ms. Harkins at (702) 293-8042. Written comments must be received no later than September 8, 2000. It is strongly encouraged that written comments be received by the close of the comment period for complete consideration.

If you have any further questions, please contact Jayne Harkins at 702/293 8785 or Mr. Tom Ryan at 801/524-3732.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Johnson, Director

## Lower Colorado Region

cc:

BCOO-1000

BCOO-4600

LC-2500

LC-2001

Daily

WBR:DCurtis:lb:7/6/00:293-8132

int reader.DAC