



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Colorado River Basin Lake Powell & Lake Mead Operations Post-2026

AMWG Meeting
August 12, 2026

Post-2026 Update

- Final EIS was released on July 31, 2026
 - Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register
 - Identifies a Preferred Alternative consisting of a 10-year decision framework
 - Available on Reclamation's website:
<https://www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/post2026/final-eis/>
- Anticipate 2027–2028 Operating Guidelines and Record of Decision to be issued soon - before operations begin October 1, 2026



Final EIS Overview

- **Overview of the Preferred Alternative**

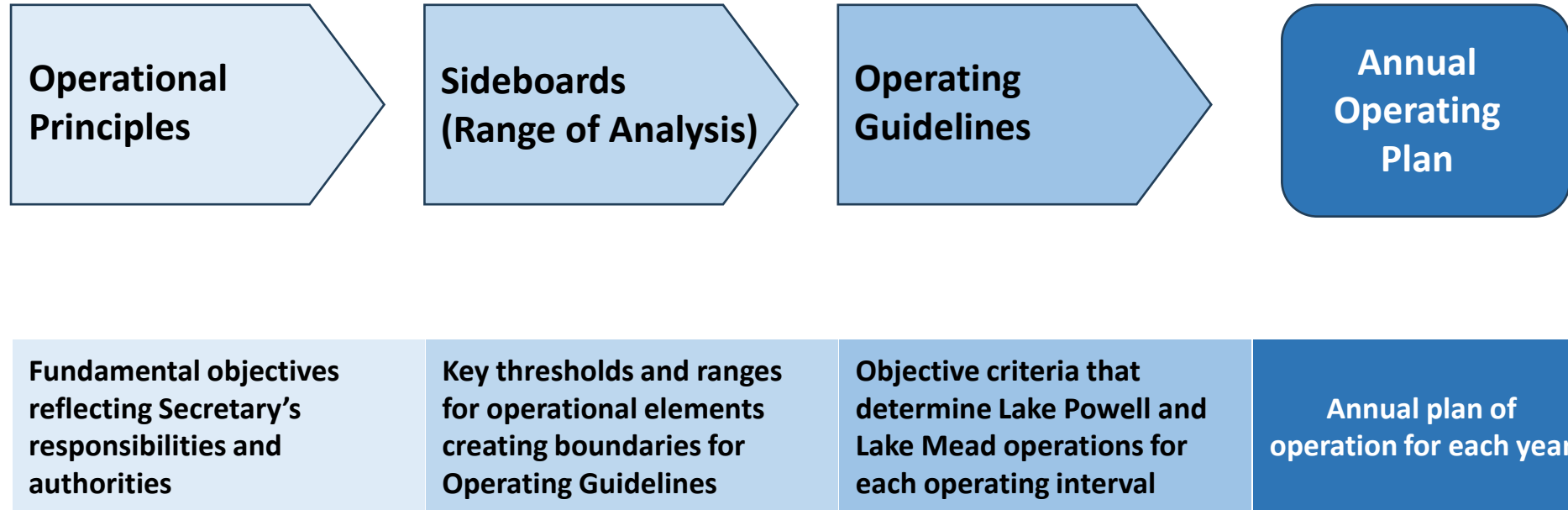
- The Preferred Alternative is a 10-year **decision framework** through 2036
- Establishes operational principles (section 2.4.2.2), sideboards (section 2.4.2.3), and a process (section 2.4.2.4) that would govern development and issuance of operating guidelines covering anticipated 2-year intervals (unless consensus-based agreements provide for a longer duration)
- The framework does not establish specific operating guidelines; rather, it provides the structure within which operating guidelines would be developed, reviewed, and periodically updated.

- **“Representative Preferred Alternative”**

- Set of modeling assumptions designed around the Preferred Alternative to approximate the range of operating guidelines that may be adopted for each interval during the 10-year framework



Preferred Alternative – Decision Framework



- *Each set of Operating Guidelines would be developed through a process with Basin States, Basin Tribes and other partner-stakeholder engagement with the goal of reaching consensus-based Operating Guidelines. The new Guidelines would be published in the Federal Register prior to issuing operational determinations.*
- *The process to develop new Operating Guidelines would start during the second year of the current operating interval (e.g. October 1, 2027), assuming a 2-year interval.*



Preferred Alternative – Operational Principles

1. Operations should be responsive to hydrology
2. Critical federal infrastructure must be protected through practical and deliberate operations
3. Operating Guidelines should implement the Long-Range Operating Criteria while also providing directions to address extraordinary circumstances
4. Operating Guidelines should prioritize consensus-based recommendations



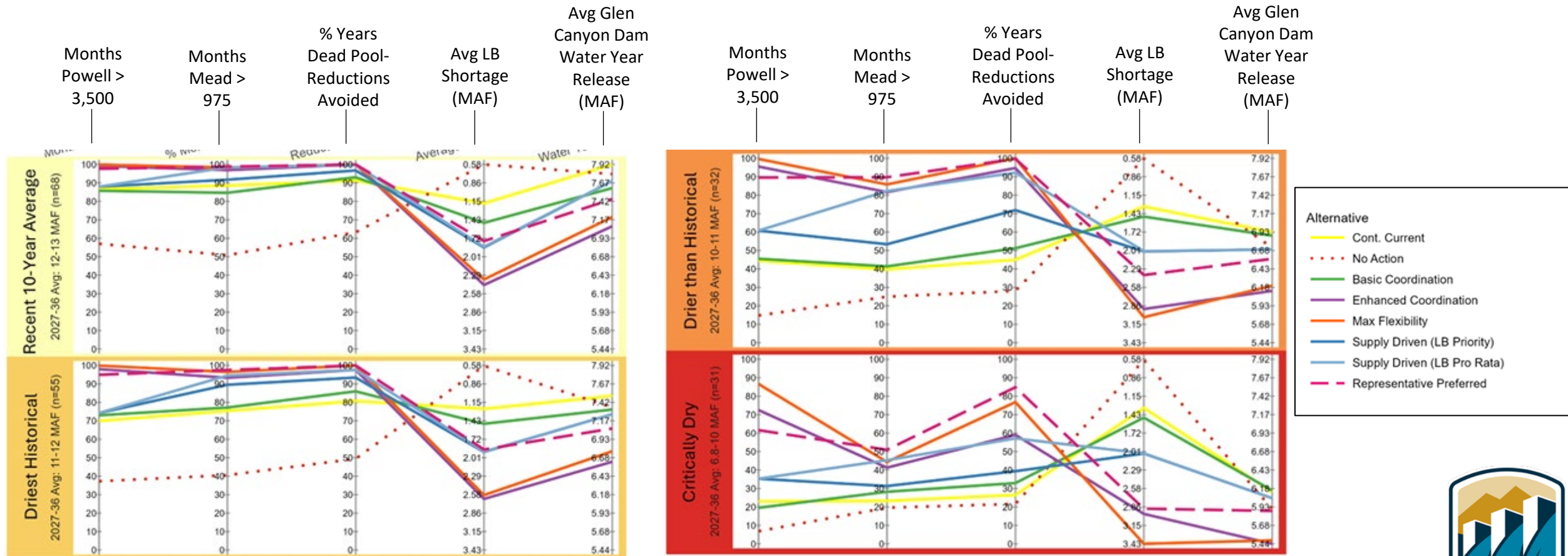
Preferred Alternative – Operational Sideboards

Operational Element	Range/Threshold
Lower Basin Shortage Guidelines	• Up to 3.0 maf to provide protection of critical infrastructure at Hoover Dam in dry hydrologic conditions. • The allocation of shortages would be based on applicable law, including the Consolidated Decree. Deviation from applicable law would occur only if water entitlement holders have reached voluntary arrangements. • Consultation if projected Lake Mead elevation < 1,000 ft to determine additional reductions in the Lower Basin
Coordinated Reservoir Operations	• 5.0 maf to 12.0 maf Lake Powell WY releases to provide protection for critical infrastructure at Glen Canyon Dam and sufficiently high releases necessary to prevent spill avoidance releases. • Consultation would occur if projected Lake Powell elevation < 3,500 ft to determine potential additional actions.
Storage and Delivery of Conserved System and Non-system Water	• Lake Powell: up to 3.0 maf • Lake Mead: up to 8.0 maf (supports existing ICS, new ICS-type program, conservation pools and exchange mechanisms)
Lower Basin Surplus Guidelines	• Up to 500.0 kaf in addition to Flood Control and Quantified Surplus
Additional Activities Above Lake Powell	• Potential for maximum use of CRSP Upper Initial Units within their respective RODs to release additional water if needed to protect critical infrastructure • Voluntary Upper Basin contributions up to 200 kaf/year subject to hydrologic conditions



Performance of Final EIS Alternatives

Figure 2-3
Key Performance Tradeoffs in Different Hydrologic Conditions



Final EIS – Contents

- Volume I – Main Body
 - Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need
 - Chapter 2 - Description of Alternatives
 - Chapter 3 - Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences
 - Chapter 4 - Consultation and Coordination
- Volume II – Supporting Appendices
 - 20 Appendices (A-T)
- Volume III – Resource Analysis Technical Appendices
 - 17 Appendices (TA-3 - TA-19)
- Volume IV – Preparers, References, Glossary, and Index



Final EIS – Notable Changes From Draft EIS

- Incorporation and analysis of the Preferred Alternative
- Inclusion of quantitative analysis of hydropower economic rates and recreation visitation
- Revised initial reservoir condition assumptions in modeling to reflect the “Dry” initial condition assumptions only
- Improved consistency and clarity in DMDU descriptions and use of modeling results, including clearer discussion of uncertainty
- Added emphasis on the first decade of potential resource impacts to align with the key period of performance of the Preferred Alternative
- Revised Ch 3 resource sections to clarify assumptions, methods, and conclusions, and improve readability through clearer organization, plain language, and reduced repetition
- Statistical summary tables contained within resource technical appendices were moved to the end of the applicable appendix to improve readability and document flow



Final EIS – Notable Changes From Draft EIS (cont.)

- **Added Supporting Appendices**
 - **Appendix P: Tribal Consultation and Coordination Efforts**
 - Added to summarize consultation and coordination efforts between Reclamation and Basin Tribes
 - **Appendix Q: Federal Register Notices**
 - Added to document all *Federal Register* notices issued for the process
 - **Appendix R: Response to Public Comment**
 - Added to summarize comment themes and Reclamation's responses.
 - **Appendix S: Addition Description of Alternatives**
 - Added to provide descriptions of the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS
 - **Appendix T: Preliminary Description and Analysis of Anticipated Operating Guidelines for 2027 and 2028**
 - Added to include a preliminary description and analysis of the anticipated first operating interval covering 2027-2028



DISCUSSION



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