

**September 24-Month Study
Date: September 15, 2021**

From: Water Resources Group, Salt Lake City
To: All Colorado River Annual Operating Plan (AOP) Recipients

Current Reservoir Status

Reservoir	August Inflow (unregulated) (acre-feet)	Percent of Average (%)	September 13, Midnight Elevation (feet)	September 13, Midnight Reservoir Storage (acre-feet)
Fontenelle	35,200	46	6,492.90	237,700
Flaming Gorge	45,200	51	6,020.71	3,004,700
Blue Mesa	45,500	72	7,444.78	281,500
Navajo	4,900	11	6,027.49	983,600
Powell	293,900	59	3,548.07	7,447,800

Expected Operations

The operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead in this September 2021 24-Month Study is pursuant to the December 2007 Record of Decision on Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead (Interim Guidelines), and reflects the 2021 Annual Operating Plan (AOP). Pursuant to the Interim Guidelines, the August 2020 24-Month Study projections of the January 1, 2021, system storage and reservoir water surface elevations set the operational tier for the coordinated operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead during 2021.

The August 2020 24-Month Study projected the January 1, 2021, Lake Powell elevation to be below the 2021 Equalization Elevation of 3,659 feet and above elevation 3,575 feet. Consistent with Section 6.B of the Interim Guidelines, Lake Powell is operating under the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier for water year 2021. With an 8.23 million acre-foot (maf) release from Lake Powell in water year 2021, the April 2021 24-Month Study projected the end of water year elevation at Lake Powell to be below 3,575 feet. Therefore, in accordance with Section 6.B.1 of the Interim Guidelines, Lake Powell will continue to release 8.23 maf through the remainder of the water year 2021.

Consistent with Section 2.B.5 of the Interim Guidelines, the Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) Surplus Condition is the criterion governing the operation of Lake Mead for calendar year 2021. In addition, Section III.B of Exhibit 1 to the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) Agreement is also governing the operation of Lake Mead in calendar year 2021.

The August 2021 24-Month study projected the January 1, 2022, Lake Powell elevation to be less than 3,575 feet and at or above 3,525 feet and the Lake Mead elevation to be at or above 1,025 feet. Consistent with Section 6.C.1 of the Interim Guidelines the operational tier for Lake Powell in water year 2022 will be the Mid-Elevation Release Tier and the water year release volume from Lake Powell will be 7.48 maf.

The August 2021 24-Month Study projected the January 1, 2022 Lake Mead elevation to be at or below 1,075 feet and at or above 1,050 feet. Consistent with Section 2.D.1 of the Interim Guidelines, a Shortage Condition consistent with Section 2.D.1.a will govern the operation of Lake Mead for calendar year 2022. In addition, Section III.B of Exhibit 1 to the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) Agreement will also govern the operation of Lake Mead for calendar year 2022.

Consistent with the Upper Basin Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) provisions to protect a target elevation at Lake Powell of 3,525 feet, this September 2021 24-Month Study includes releases from the upstream initial units of the Colorado River Storage Project Act to deliver an additional 181 thousand acre-feet (kaf) to Lake Powell by the end of December 2021. The additional releases began in July and will continue to be implemented on the following schedule:

DROA Releases for the July 24MS Model Run

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
	(kaf)	(kaf)	(kaf)	(kaf)	(kaf)	(kaf)	Sum
Flaming Gorge	13	42	43	27	0	0	125
Blue Mesa	0	14	18	4	0	0	36
Navajo	0	0	0	0	10	10	20
Sum:	13	56	61	31	10	10	181

The releases detailed above are in addition to the already established releases determined by operational plans for each of the identified facilities. The additional delivery of 181 kaf is equivalent to Lake Powell’s elevation of approximately three feet. Water year releases from Lake Powell to Lake Mead will not be adjusted in water year 2021 as those are determined consistent with the Interim Guidelines.

The 2021 AOP is available online at:

<https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/aop/AOP21.pdf>.

The Interim Guidelines are available online at:

<https://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/strategies/RecordofDecision.pdf>.

The Colorado River DCPs are available online at:

<https://www.usbr.gov/dcp/finaldocs.html>.

The Upper Basin Hydrology Summary is available online at:

https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/studies/24Month_08_ucb.pdf.

Fontenelle Reservoir – As of September 1, 2021, the Fontenelle Reservoir pool elevation is 6493.47 feet, which amounts to 72 percent of live storage capacity. Inflows for the month of August totaled 35,000 acre-feet (af) or 46 percent of average.

Due to dry hydrologic conditions in the Upper Green River Basin, Fontenelle’s releases were lowered from 700 cfs to 600 cfs on August 23, 2021. Based on the observed inflows for the period between April and July, this year’s inflows into the Fontenelle Reservoir ranked as the 6th driest since 1966.

The September final forecast for unregulated inflows into Fontenelle for the next three months projects dry conditions. September, October, and November inflow volumes amount to 30,000 af (65 percent of average), 32,000 af (66 percent of average), and 32,000 af (76 percent of average), respectively.

The August 26, 2021, Fontenelle Working Group meeting minutes will be available shortly online on USBR’s website at <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/crsp/wg/ft/ftcurrnt.html>. The next Fontenelle Working Group meeting is scheduled for 10:00 am on April 21, 2022. Details on the meeting will be provided as we get closer to the meeting date. The Fontenelle Working Group is an open public forum for information exchange between Reclamation and other parties associated with the operation of Fontenelle Reservoir.

Flaming Gorge -- As of September 7, 2021, Flaming Gorge Reservoir pool elevation is 6021.13 feet, which amounts to 81 percent of live storage capacity. Unregulated inflow volume for the month of August is approximately 45,000 acre-feet (af), which is 51% of the average August unregulated inflow volume.

The September final forecast for unregulated inflows into Flaming Gorge for the next three months projects below average conditions. September, October, and November forecasted unregulated inflow volumes amount to 33,000 af (60% of average), 36,000 af (61% of average), and 37,000 af (72% of average), respectively.

Pursuant to provisions of the Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA), releases from Flaming Gorge are being increased to deliver an additional 125,000 af to Lake Powell by the end of October 2021. This decision was made in response to basin-wide drought and storage concerns at Lake Powell. The Flaming Gorge Operation Plan is currently being amended and releases will be made within the flexibility of the 2006 Flaming Gorge Record of Decision and within the provisions of the DROA. Reclamation and the Colorado Basin states remain committed to working together to develop future drought response plans.

Average daily release at Flaming Gorge for September is planned to be about 1,600 cfs to achieve 1,700 cfs to 1,800 cfs in Reach 2.

Reclamation is planning to hold the next Flaming Gorge Working Group meeting on March 17, 2022 at 10:00 am MDT (tentative) via WebEx. The Flaming Gorge Working Group is an open public forum for information exchange between Reclamation and the stakeholders of Flaming Gorge Dam. The public is encouraged to attend and comment on the operations and plans

presented by Reclamation at these meetings. Meeting notes from past Working Group meetings are posted on the Working Group webpage. For more information on this group and these meetings please contact Dale Hamilton at 801-379-1186.

Aspinall Unit Reservoirs – As of September 6, 2021 releases from Crystal Dam are approximately 1615 cfs. Gunnison Tunnel diversions are occurring and are currently about 1070 cfs and is near full capacity. Flows of the Gunnison River in the Black Canyon are being maintained at about 600 cfs.

The unregulated inflow volume in August to Blue Mesa was 45,497 af (72 percent of average). Unregulated Inflow volumes forecasted for Blue Mesa for the next three months (September, October, November) are projected to be: 26,000 af (68 percent of average), 26,000 af (68 percent of average) and 22,000 af (71 percent of average), respectively. The September 24-Month Study is reflective of these new forecasts.

The 2021 water year unregulated inflow volume is projected to be 524,714 af (55 percent of average). The water supply period (April-July) for 2021 observed 316,951 af of unregulated inflow (47 percent of average).

In August and September of 2021, average daily releases are scheduled to increase in response to a continual declining dry hydrologic condition for the Colorado River system. This drought operation is implemented under the Upper Basin Drought Response Operations Agreement. The maximum flexibility within the Record of Decision will be used. Notification of releases will occur prior to the scheduled release change.

Under the Aspinall FEIS/ROD, base flow minimum targets for flows measured in the Whitewater Reach of the Gunnison River are established for 6 separate categories of hydrological conditions. The category for this year is the dry category. The baseflow minimum target condition in the Whitewater Reach in years when the hydrologic category is dry, during the months of August through March, are to maintain a measured flow of 750 cfs. This is a minimum flow and all flows greater than this level are within the Aspinall FEIS/ROD. Projected flows in the Whitewater Reach under the DROA operation will range between 1000 and 1500 cfs during the months of August and September when additional water is released for DROA. This is within the constraints of the Aspinall FEIS/ROD.

Blue Mesa will not fill in water year 2021. Blue Mesa reached a peak elevation of 7,464.28 feet on June 22, 2021. The elevation is now declining and is projected to be about 7432 feet at the end of the water year. This will be down approximately 87 feet from the full pool elevation (7,519.4 feet) and water storage in Blue Mesa at this time will be approximately 218,000 acre-feet which is 26 percent of live capacity.

The Aspinall Unit Operations Group is an open public forum for information exchange between Reclamation and the stakeholders of the Aspinall Unit. The public is encouraged to attend and comments on the operations and plans presented by Reclamation at these meetings. Meeting notes from past working Group meetings are posted on the Operations Group webpage. For more

information on this group and these meetings please contact Erik Knight in the Grand Junction Area Office at (970) 248-0629.

The next Operations Group meeting will be held in January 2022. The meeting may be virtual or in person and a decision has not yet been made. Contact Erik Knight in the Grand Junction Area Office at (970) 248-0629 to get more information regarding this Operation Group meeting.

Navajo Reservoir – On September 7th, the daily average release rate from Navajo Dam was 800 cfs while reservoir inflow was averaging approximately 300 cfs. The water surface elevation was 6028.89 feet above sea level. At this elevation the live storage is 0.997 maf (59 percent of live storage capacity) and the active storage is 0.336 maf (32 percent of active storage capacity). The Navajo Indian Irrigation Project (NIIP) is diverting 502 cfs. The San Juan-Chama project is diverting 0 cfs from the basin above the reservoir.

Releases from Navajo Dam are made for authorized purposes of the Navajo Unit and are pursuant to the Record of Decision for the Navajo Reservoir Operations. Releases target the San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program's recommended downstream baseflow range of 500 cfs to 1,000 cfs through the critical habitat reach of the San Juan River (Farmington, NM to Lake Powell). Current modeling shows the release will most likely vary between 500 and 1,000 cfs to accomplish this for the remainder of summer and into the fall.

Preliminary modified unregulated inflow (MUI) into Navajo in August was 4.9 kaf, which was 13 percent of average for the month. The volume released downstream totaled 41 kaf, which was 81 percent of average for the month. NIIP diverted a total of 39 kaf in August.

The final April-July MUI was 378 kaf, which was 51% of average.

The most probable MUI forecast for September, October, and November is 20,000 af (46 percent of average), 25,000 af (53 percent of average), and 25,000 af (75 percent of average), respectively.

In November and December of 2021, releases are scheduled to increase in response to a continual declining dry hydrologic condition for the Colorado River system. This drought operation is implemented under the Upper Basin Drought Response Operations Agreement. The maximum flexibility within the Record of Decision will be used. Notification of releases will occur prior to the scheduled release change.

Reclamation conducts Public Operations Meetings three times per year to gather input for determining upcoming operations for Navajo Reservoir. Input from individuals, organizations, and agencies along with other factors such as weather, water rights, endangered species requirements, flood control, hydro power, recreation, fish and wildlife management, and reservoir levels, will be considered in the development of these reservoir operation plans. In addition, the meetings are used to coordinate activities and exchange information among agencies, water users, and other interested parties concerning the San Juan River and Navajo Reservoir. The next meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday, January 18th 2022, at 1:00 PM.

Glen Canyon Dam / Lake Powell

Current Status

The unregulated inflow volume to Lake Powell during August was 294 thousand acre-feet (kaf) (59% of average). The release volume from Glen Canyon Dam in July was 801 kaf. The end of August elevation and storage of Lake Powell were 3548.96 feet (151 feet from full pool) and 7.51 million acre-feet (maf) (31% of live capacity), respectively.

Current Operations

The operating tier for water year 2021 (October 2020 through September 2021) was established in August 2020 as the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier, consistent with Section 6.B of the Interim Guidelines. Consistent with Section 6.B of the Interim Guidelines, Lake Powell's operations in water year 2021 will be governed by the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier. With an 8.23 maf release from Lake Powell in water year 2021, the April 2021 24-Month Study projected the end of water year elevation at Lake Powell to be below 3,575 feet. Therefore, in accordance with Section 6.B.1 of the Interim Guidelines, Lake Powell will continue to release 8.23 maf through the remainder of the water year 2021.

The anticipated release volume for September 2021 is 623,000 af with fluctuations anticipated between about 7,060 cfs in the nighttime to about 12,656 cfs in the daytime, and consistent with the Glen Canyon Dam, Record of Decision (dated December 2016). The October anticipated release is 480,000 af with fluctuations between about 6,220 cfs to around 8,965 cfs with a three-hour evening weekend peak on Saturday of 9,437 cfs.

In addition to daily scheduled fluctuations for power generation, the instantaneous releases from Glen Canyon Dam may also fluctuate to provide 40 megawatts (mw) of system regulation. These instantaneous release adjustments stabilize the electrical generation and transmission system and translate to a range of about 1,100 cfs above or below the hourly scheduled release rate. Under system normal conditions, fluctuations for regulation are typically short lived and generally balance out over the hour with minimal or no noticeable impacts on downstream river flow conditions.

Releases from Glen Canyon Dam can also fluctuate beyond scheduled releases when called upon to respond to unscheduled power outages or power system emergencies. Depending on the severity of the system emergency, the response from Glen Canyon Dam can be significant, within the full range of the operating capacity of the power plant for as long as is necessary to maintain balance in the transmission system. Glen Canyon Dam currently maintains 30 mw (approximately 800 cfs) of generation capacity in reserve in order to respond to a system emergency even when generation rates are already high. System emergencies occur infrequently and typically require small responses from Glen Canyon Dam. However, these responses can have a noticeable impact on the river downstream of Glen Canyon Dam.

Inflow Forecasts and Model Projections

The forecast for water year 2021 unregulated inflow to Lake Powell, issued on September 1, 2021, by the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center, projects that the most probable (median) unregulated inflow volume this year will be 3.56 maf (33% of average).

In addition to the September 2021 24-Month Study based on the Most Probable inflow scenario, and in accordance with the Upper Basin Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA), Reclamation has conducted model runs in September to determine a possible range of reservoir elevations under probable minimum and probable maximum inflow scenarios. Probable minimum and probable maximum model runs are conducted in January, April, August, and October. The probable minimum inflow scenario reflects a dry hydrologic condition which statistically would be exceeded 90% of the time. The most probable inflow scenario reflects a median hydrologic condition which statistically would be exceeded 50% of the time. The probable maximum inflow scenario reflects a wet hydrologic condition which statistically would be exceeded 10% of the time. There is approximately an 80% probability that a future elevation will fall inside the range of the minimum and maximum inflow scenarios. Additionally, there are possible inflow scenarios that would result in reservoir elevations falling outside the ranges indicated in these reports.

The DROA coordination will continue until either (i) the minimum probable projected elevation remains above 3,525 feet for 24 months or (ii) the process moves to the next step when the most probable projected elevation indicates Powell elevations below 3,525 feet and a Drought Response Operations Plan is developed.

The September forecast for water year 2022 ranges from a minimum probable of 4.74 maf (44% of average) to a maximum probable of 16.0 maf (148% of average) with the most probable forecast for water year 2022 of 8.20 maf (76% of average). There is a 10% chance that inflows could be higher than the current maximum probable forecast and a 10% chance that inflows could be lower than the minimum probable forecast.

Based on the current forecast of 8.20 maf unregulated inflow for water year 2022, the September 24-Month Study projects Lake Powell elevation will end water year 2022 near 3,542.07 feet with approximately 7.03 maf in storage (29% of capacity). Note that projections of elevation and storage for water year 2022 have significant uncertainty at this point in the season. Projections of end of water year 2022 elevation using the minimum and maximum probable inflow forecast from and results from the September 2021 model runs are 3,506.01 feet and 3,615.68 feet, respectively. Under these scenarios, there is a 10% chance that inflows will be higher, resulting in higher elevation, and 10% chance that inflows will be lower, resulting in lower elevation. The annual release volume from Lake Powell during water year 2022 will be 7.48 maf as determined under Section 6.C.1 of the Interim Guidelines.

Upper Colorado River Basin Hydrology

Upper Colorado River Basin regularly experiences significant year to year hydrologic variability. During the 21-year period 2000 to 2020, however, the unregulated inflow to Lake Powell, which is a good measure of hydrologic conditions in the Colorado River Basin, was above average in only 4 out of the past 19 years. The period 2000-2020 is the lowest 21-year period since the closure of Glen Canyon Dam in 1963, with an average unregulated inflow of 8.62 maf, or 80% of the 30-year average (1981-2010). (For comparison, the 1981-2010 total water year average is 10.83 maf.) The unregulated inflow during the 2000-2020 period has ranged from a low of 2.64 maf (24% of average) in water year 2002 to a high of 15.97 maf (147% of average) in water year

2011. In water year 2018 unregulated inflow volume to Lake Powell was 4.6 maf (43% of average), the third driest year on record above 2002 and 1977. Under the current most probable forecast, the total water year 2021 unregulated inflow to Lake Powell is projected to be 3.56 maf (33% of average).

At the beginning of water year 2021, total system storage in the Colorado River Basin was 28.88 maf (48% of 59.6 maf total system capacity). This is a decrease of 2.77 maf over the total storage at the beginning of water year 2020 when total system storage was 31.64 maf (53% of capacity). Since the beginning of water year 2000, total Colorado Basin storage has experienced year to year increases and decreases in response to wet and dry hydrology, ranging from a high of 94% of capacity at the beginning of 2000 to the now current level of 48% of capacity at the beginning of water year 2021. Based on current inflow forecasts, the current projected end of water year total Colorado Basin reservoir storage for water year 2021 is approximately 22.94 maf (38% of total system capacity). The actual end of water year 2021 system storage may vary from this projection, primarily due to uncertainty regarding this season's runoff and reservoir inflow.