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Secretary Kempthorne Issues the 2008 Annual Operating Plan for the Colorado River

Plan Includes Provisions to Protect, Conserve Water Supplies

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today issued the 2008 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for the operation of Colorado River reservoirs and distribution of Colorado River water to Arizona, Nevada and California. A letter transmitting the approved AOP was sent to the governors of each of the seven Colorado River Basin States.

The AOP is normally issued in December, but was delayed this year to allow the incorporation of new interim river operating guidelines. Those guidelines, contained in the Record of Decision for Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead (Interim Guidelines), were approved by the Secretary on December 13, 2007.



"The Interim Guidelines ensure the Colorado River will be managed to protect and conserve its water supplies for current and future generations," Kempthorne said. "Developed through a collaborative and cooperative effort by the Department, the basin states, and other interested stakeholders, they encourage water conservation, allow us to plan for potential shortages, implement closer coordination of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, and provide the flexibility to deal with such potential challenges as climate change and persistent drought."

The AOP establishes a minimum objective release of 8.23 million acre-feet (MAF) from Lake Powell to the Lower Basin in water year 2008 (October 1, 2007-September 30, 2008). And it provides that if, on April 1, Lake Powell's elevation is projected to be above 3,636 feet mean sea level on September 30, additional water would be released from Lake Powell into Lake Mead to more closely equalize the amount of water in each reservoir.

Under the 2008 AOP, Arizona, California and Nevada will be entitled to take their basic Colorado River entitlements in water year 2008 (2.8 million acre-feet, 4.4 million acre-feet, and 300,000 acre-feet, respectively), while also providing for some modification of these deliveries. For example, to promote efficient and prudent water use, these states may conserve part of their annual entitlement through extraordinary conservation

measures, and leave that water in Lake Mead for use at a future date. The states, which have previously conserved small amounts of water in Lake Mead, could also take delivery of that water.

And, finally, the AOP makes available 1.5 million acre-feet of water for delivery to Mexico in accordance with the 1944 United States-Mexico Water Treaty.

The AOP is developed in consultation with representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin States, the Upper Colorado River Commission, Native American Tribes, appropriate Federal agencies, representatives of the scientific community, environmental organizations, and other interested parties.

"The Interim Guidelines will be used to develop the AOP through 2026," said Commissioner of Reclamation Robert Johnson. "They encourage the efficient use and management of Colorado River water, and contain operational elements that would respond to potential climate change impacts in a manner that would protect the reservoirs and the water they provide for the people of this basin."

The AOP is available at http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/AOP2008/AOP08_final.pdf.

— DOI —

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