



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

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### **2024 COLORADO RIVER WATER DELIVERY REDUCTIONS ANNOUNCED FOR THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO**

Colorado River water allocations to users in the United States and Mexico will be reduced in 2024 for the third time since the signing of the 1944 Water Treaty. The reductions are based on reservoir elevation projections by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation for Lake Mead, the reservoir that stores water for delivery to the U.S. Lower Basin States (Arizona, California, Nevada) and Mexico.

The reduced allocations are in accordance with Minute 323, an agreement signed in 2017 by the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC). The cooperative actions identified in the Minute, including investment in water conservation projects, have benefited water users in both countries.

Under Minute 323, both countries agree to reduce the use of their annual Colorado River water allotment when the January 1 Lake Mead elevation is projected to be at or below 1,075 feet. This is in addition to water savings starting at elevation 1,090 feet or below that will be recoverable when reservoir conditions improve. Reclamation this week released the August 2023 24-Month Study, which determines the distribution of volumes to the United States and Mexico under low elevation reservoir conditions for 2024, indicating a projected Lake Mead elevation of 1,065.27 feet on January 1, 2024.

In 2024, Mexico's allotment will be reduced by 50,000 acre-feet (62 million cubic meters [mcm]) and, in addition, Mexico will contribute 30,000 acre-feet (37 mcm) of recoverable water savings under the Minute's Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan (BWSCP), resulting in a total reduction of deliveries to Mexico of 80,000 acre-feet (99 mcm). Lower Basin users in the United States will see a reduction of 333,000 acre-feet (411 mcm) and recoverable water savings of 200,000 acre-feet (247 mcm)

under domestic policies known as the 2007 Interim Guidelines and the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP), resulting in a total reduction to users in the Lower Basin in the United States of 533,000 acre-feet (658 mcm).

Even with these reductions and savings, officials in both countries recognize that more action is needed – and needed promptly – in response to worsening drought and low runoff conditions. The two largest reservoirs in the basin – Lakes Powell and Mead – both reached record low elevations in 2022. Most of the flow of the Colorado River originates in the upper portions of the Colorado River Basin in the Rocky Mountains. While improved hydrology this year has provided an opportunity to recover some reservoir storage, the Colorado River system remains at risk, with combined storage of Lakes Powell and Mead of just 36%.

The United States and Mexico are working in partnership on additional water conservation measures to bolster storage and further protect critical elevations in both lakes. This effort includes U.S. funds, in addition to the \$31.5 million dollars in Minute 323, to support conservation projects in Mexico. The combined efforts of the United States and Mexico under Minute 323, its predecessor Minute 319, and related conservation activities have already conserved significant volumes at Lake Mead. However, without additional immediate action or relief from the dry conditions associated with climate change, the reservoirs are projected to continue their decline, putting water deliveries at risk to users in the entire Basin, including Mexico.

“As we move into a third year of water delivery reductions, water conservation has never been more important,” said U.S. Commissioner Maria-Elena Giner. “We look forward to partnering with Mexico to implement additional conservation projects as soon as possible.”

Mexican Commissioner Adriana Resendez said, “The application of reductions and recoverable savings together with water conservation efforts in both countries are necessary measures to address shortage conditions in the basin.” She added that all of these efforts are aimed at protecting levels in the system to benefit all users in both countries.

The agreements reached for reduced allocations and recoverable savings reflect U.S.-Mexico cooperation on the Colorado River since 2007. These agreements reflect a shared commitment of the Governments and their partners in both countries to work proactively to address the potential for

unprecedented reductions on the Colorado River as a result of hydrologic conditions, meeting system demands, and increased temperatures in the basin.

Water managers from the United States and Mexico are continuing to meet to identify additional water conservation measures that can be implemented in the near term to protect critical reservoir elevations. In addition, the IBWC will continue to report periodically on changing system conditions so users in both countries can be well informed and, if needed, can adopt necessary actions to respond to the prevailing shortage conditions in the basin.

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