

**CRITERIA FOR COORDINATED LONG-RANGE OPERATION OF  
COLORADO RIVER RESERVOIRS PURSUANT TO  
THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROJECT ACT OF  
SEPTEMBER 30,1968 (P. L. 90-537)**

**AMENDED MARCH 21, 2005**

These Operating Criteria are promulgated in compliance with Section 602 of Public Law 90-537. They are to control the coordinated long-range operation of the storage reservoirs in the Colorado River Basin constructed under the authority of the Colorado River Storage Project Act (hereinafter "Upper Basin Storage Reservoirs") and the Boulder Canyon Project Act (Lake Mead). The Operating Criteria will be administered consistent with applicable Federal laws, the Mexican Water Treaty, interstate compacts, and decrees relating to the use of the waters of the Colorado River.

The Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter the "Secretary") may modify the Operating Criteria from time to time in accordance with Section 602(b) of P. L. 90-537. The Secretary will sponsor a formal public review of the Operating Criteria at least every 5 years, with participation by State representatives as each Governor may designate and such other parties and agencies as the Secretary may deem appropriate.

**I. ANNUAL REPORT**

(1) On January 1 of each year, the Secretary shall transmit to the Congress and to the Governors of the Colorado River Basin States a report describing the actual operation under the adopted criteria for the preceding compact water year and the projected plan of operation for the current year.

(2) The plan of operation shall include such detailed rules and quantities as may be necessary and consistent with the criteria contained herein, and shall reflect appropriate consideration of the uses of the reservoirs for all purposes, including flood control, river regulation, beneficial consumptive uses, power production, water quality control, recreation, enhancement of fish and wildlife, and other environmental factors. The projected plan of operation may be revised to reflect the current hydrologic conditions, and the Congress and the Governors of the Colorado River Basin States shall be advised of any changes by June of each year.

**II. OPERATION OF UPPER BASIN RESERVOIRS**

(1) The annual plan of operation shall include a determination by the Secretary of the quantity of water considered necessary as of September 30 of that year to be in storage as required by Section 602(a) of P.L. 90-537 (hereinafter "602(a) Storage"). The quantity of 602(a) Storage shall be determined by the Secretary after consideration of all applicable laws and relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) Historic streamflows;
- (b) The most critical period of record;
- (c) Probabilities of water supply;
- (d) Estimated future depletions in the upper basin, including the effects of recurrence of critical periods of water supply;

- (e) The "Report of the Committee on Probabilities and Test Studies to the Task Force on Operating Criteria for the Colorado River," dated October 30, 1969, and such additional studies as the Secretary deems necessary;
- (f) The necessity to assure that upper basin consumptive uses not be impaired because of failure to store sufficient water to assure deliveries under Section 602(a)(1) and (2) of P.L. 90-537.

(2) If in the plan of operation, either:

- (a) the Upper Basin Storage Reservoirs active storage forecast for September 30 of the current year is less than the quantity of 602(a) Storage determined by the Secretary under Article II (1) hereof, for that date; or
- (b) the Lake Powell active storage forecast for that date is less than the Lake Mead active storage forecast for that date:

the objective shall be to maintain a minimum release of water from Lake Powell of 8.23 million acre-feet for that year.

(3) If, in the plan of operation, the Upper Basin Storage Reservoirs active storage forecast for September 30 of the current water year is greater than the quantity of 602(a) Storage determination for that date, water shall be released annually from Lake Powell at a rate greater than 8.23 million acre-feet per year to the extent necessary to accomplish any or all of the following objectives:

- (a) to the extent it can be reasonably applied in the States of the Lower Division to the uses specified in Article III(e) of the Colorado River Compact, but no such releases shall be made when the active storage in Lake Powell is less than the active storage in Lake Mead,
- (b) to maintain, as nearly as practicable, active storage in Lake Mead equal to the active storage in Lake Powell, and
- (c) to avoid anticipated spills from Lake Powell.

(4) In the application of Article II(3) (b) herein, the annual release will be made to the extent that it can be passed through Glen Canyon Powerplant when operated at the available capability of the powerplant. Any water thus retained in Lake Powell to avoid bypass of water at the Glen Canyon Powerplant will be released through the Glen Canyon Powerplant as soon as practicable to equalize the active storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

(5) Releases from Lake Powell pursuant to these criteria shall not prejudice the position of either the upper or lower basin interests with respect to required deliveries at Lee Ferry pursuant to the Colorado River Compact.

### **III OPERATION OF LAKE MEAD**

(1) Water released from Lake Powell, plus the tributary inflows between Lake Powell and Lake Mead, shall be regulated in Lake Mead and either pumped from Lake Mead or released to the Colorado River to meet requirements as follows:

- (a) Mexican Treaty obligations;
- (b) Reasonable consumptive use requirements of mainstream users in the Lower Basin;
- (c) Net river losses;

- (d) Net reservoir losses;
- (e) Regulatory wastes.

(2) After commencement of delivery of mainstream water by means of the Central Arizona Project, the consumptive use requirements of Article III(1)(b) of these Operating Criteria will be met to the following extent:

(a) *Normal*: The annual pumping and release from Lake Mead will be sufficient to satisfy 7,500,000 acre-feet of annual consumptive use in accordance with the decree in *Arizona v. California*, 376 U.S. 340 (1964).

(b) *Surplus*: The Secretary shall determine from time to time when water in quantities greater than "Normal" is available for either pumping or release from Lake Mead pursuant to Article II(b) (2) of the decree in *Arizona v. California* after consideration of all relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (i) the requirements stated in Article III(1) of these Operating Criteria;
- (ii) requests for water by holders of water delivery contracts with the United States, and of other rights recognized in the decree in *Arizona v. California*;
- (iii) actual and forecast quantities of active storage in Lake Mead and the Upper Basin Storage Reservoirs; and
- (iv) estimated net inflow to Lake Mead.

(c) *Storage*: The Secretary shall determine from time to time when insufficient mainstream water is available to satisfy annual consumptive use requirements of 7,500,000 acre-feet after consideration of all relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (i) the requirements stated in Article III(1) of these Operating Criteria;
- (ii) actual and forecast quantities of active storage in Lake Mead;
- (iii) estimate of net inflow to Lake Mead for the current year;
- (iv) historic streamflows, including the most critical period of record;
- (v) priorities set forth in Article II(A) of the decree in *Arizona v. California*; and
- (vi) the purposes stated in Article 1(2) of these Operating Criteria.

The shortage provisions of Article II(B)(3) of the decree in *Arizona v. California* shall thereupon become effective and consumptive uses from the mainstream shall be restricted to the extent determined by the Secretary to be required by Section 301 (b) of Public Law 90-537.

#### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

(1) In addition to the definitions in Section 606 of P. L. 90-537, the following shall also apply:

(a) "Spills," as used in Article II(3) (c) herein, means water released from Lake Powell which cannot be utilized for project purposes, including, but not limited to, the generation of power and energy.

(b) "Surplus," as used in Article III (3) (b) herein, is water which can be used to meet consumptive use in the three Lower Division States in excess of 7,500,000 acre-feet annually. The term "surplus" as used in these Operating Criteria is not to be construed as applied to, being interpretive of, or in any manner having reference to the term "surplus" in either the Colorado River Compact or the 1944 Mexican Treaty.

(c) "Net inflow to Lake Mead," as used in Article III(3) (b) (iv) and (c) (iii) herein, represents the annual inflow to Lake Mead in excess of losses from Lake Mead.

(d) "Available capability," as used in Article II(4) herein, means that portion of the total capacity of the powerplant that is physically available for generation.