



Colorado River Upper Division State Representatives of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

March 5, 2024

1. What is the purpose of the Upper Division States Post-2026 Alternative?

This Upper Division States Alternative (UDS Alternative) provides an effective approach for the Post-2026 Operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead that responds to hydrologic conditions, rebuilds storage in the reservoirs, and protects water users and resources. The current guidelines expire in 2026. By submitting this package, the Upper Division States request the Bureau of Reclamation model and consider the UDS Alternative in the NEPA process for Post-2026 Operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

2. What are the main components of the Upper Division States Alternative?

The UDS Alternative includes:

- A UDS commitment to help preserve the ability to make releases from Lake Powell.
- Lake Powell: Modeled releases from Lake Powell that are based on hydrologic conditions and designed to rebuild storage to protect Lake Powell's ability to make releases consistent with the Law of the River.
- Lake Mead: Modeled Lower Basin operations that are adapted from a concept first provided by the Lower Basin States based on the combined storage of Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

3. What are the goals of the UDS Alternative?

The UDS Alternative is designed to:

- Be consistent with the Law of the River and applicable environmental laws;
- Reduce risks to water supplies and operations caused by depleted storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead;
- Address the imbalance between water supply and demands in the Lower Basin and rebuild storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead;
- Provide greater predictability and reliability for reservoir operations under a wide range of potential future conditions due to climate change and depleted storage;

- Operate Lake Powell and Lake Mead based on observed conditions instead of unreliable forecasts;
- Recognize and account for hydrologic shortages in the Upper Basin.

4. Parallel Activities

The UDS will consider, through agreements separate from the post-2026 NEPA process, parallel activities to support Upper Basin interests:

- Voluntary conservation
- Flexible reservoir operations
- Acknowledge settled but undeveloped Tribal water rights in the Upper Basin

5. What is the status of the Basin State discussions?

While the Upper Division States submitted the Upper Division States' own Alternative, all Upper Division States remain committed to working with the Lower Basin States to develop a consensus alternative.