



# Colorado's Post-2026 Principles

Commissioner Mitchell is committed to negotiating sustainable operations at Lake Powell and Lake Mead with the Basin States, federal government, and the Tribal Nations. Her principles are rooted in irrefutable truths that we can all agree to:

1

**Acknowledging climate variability.** We must anticipate a drier, but also a more variable, hydrologic future. Upper Basin water users live on the front lines of climate change and for the last twenty plus years regularly have experienced significant cuts to their water supplies.

2

**Recognizing that water users in the Lower Basin are not more important than water users in the Upper Basin.** The Upper and Lower Basins have equal apportionments to the River in perpetuity, established by the 1922 Colorado River Compact. The 1922 Compact promises certainty and security of water supplies for both the Upper and Lower Basins.

3

**Preventing overuse in the Lower Basin.** Water use in the Lower Basin cannot continue to exceed available supplies and operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead must better respond to actual hydrology. The Lower Basin must account for all depletions, including evaporation and transit losses. The Lower Basin's overuse poses risks to the entire Basin.

4

**Defending against attempts at Compact curtailment in the Upper Basin States.** The Upper Division States are in full compliance with the 1922 Colorado River Compact; therefore, Upper Basin water uses must not be curtailed.

5

**Operating Lake Powell and Lake Mead to respond to actual hydrology and protect storage.** Balancing releases from Lake Powell and the tier structure in the 2007 Guidelines depend on conditions at Lake Mead. This has led to depleted storage, and has driven both reservoirs and System into crisis. Lake Powell releases must be determined by actual hydrology and protecting storage rather than by Lake Mead conditions.

6

**Preserving federal reserved water rights for Tribal Nations.** The Tribal Nations have water rights that they are entitled to use. Solutions for overuse in the Lower Basin cannot continue to depend on Tribes' undeveloped federal reserved water rights.

In addition, any interstate agreement must **comply with with federal environmental law** and **advance coordination between the United States and Mexico.**