



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Amy Ostdiek, Greg Johnson, Michelle Garrison

DATE: March 10, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 11. Colorado River Updates

This is an information item only, with no Board action requested.

Staff will provide an update to the Board on general Colorado River matters, including the topics below.

Post-2026 Reservoir Operations Negotiations Update

The Bureau of Reclamation completed an effectiveness review of the 2007 Interim Guidelines, which culminated in a report that is available at Reclamation's website. Following completion of this report, in December 2020, Commissioner Mitchell signed on to a letter to Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt along with the other Basin States informing the Secretary that the Basin States are initiating preliminary discussions to determine future recommendations regarding operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead beyond 2026. The letter also requested technical assistance for these efforts. As Commissioner Mitchell and her Colorado River team begin these discussions, she recognizes the importance of working with water users, Tribal Nations, and non-governmental organizations in developing state strategy. In the near future, Commissioner Mitchell will initiate discussions with these groups to discuss status and strategy going forward.

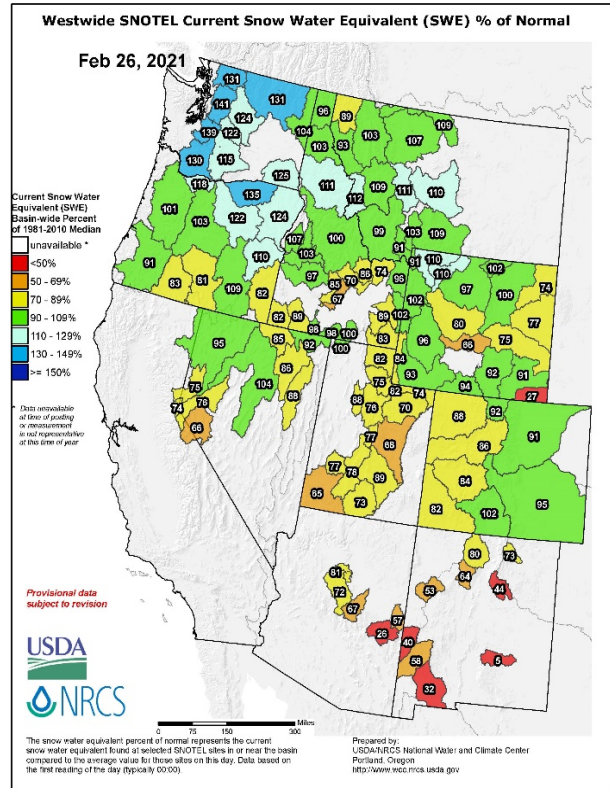
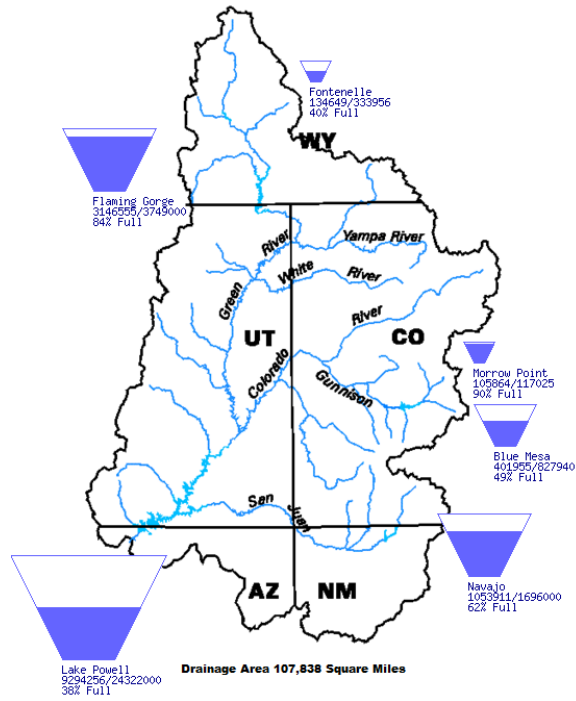
Hydrology and Operations Updates

Extremely dry conditions have persisted throughout the Colorado River Basin from spring 2020 to present. Precipitation in February 2021 improved snowpack conditions, which remain below average throughout the basin. Mid-February water supply forecasts increased slightly and range from 40-80% of average for the Upper Basin and 20-70% of average in areas of the Lower Basin. While additional precipitation during the snowpack accumulation season could increase water supply forecasts, overall water supply forecasts are likely to remain below average.



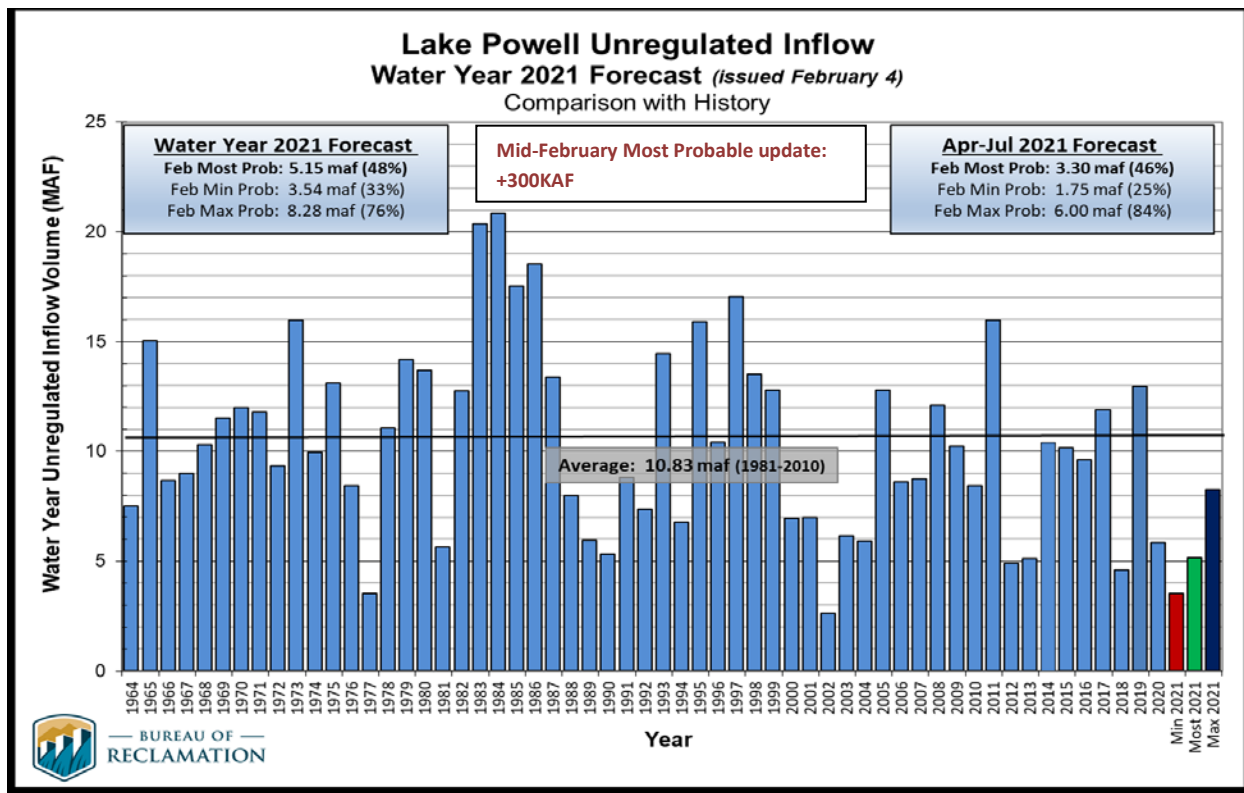
Data Current as of:
02/24/2021

Upper Colorado River Drainage Basin



Current storage and snowpack conditions





Lake Powell released 8.23 MAF for Water Year 2020. Lake Powell releases are projected to be 8.23 MAF for WY2021. Current projections suggest a WY2022 release of 7.48 MAF. That projected release may increase if hydrologic conditions improve. Staff will continue to actively monitor and provide updates regarding projections and discussions of potential impacts of continued dry conditions.

Lake Mead elevations will trigger water conservation measures under the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan for calendar year 2021.

