



TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members  
FROM: Amy Ostdiek, Greg Johnson, Michelle Garrison  
DATE: September 15, 2021  
AGENDA ITEM: 17. Colorado River Updates

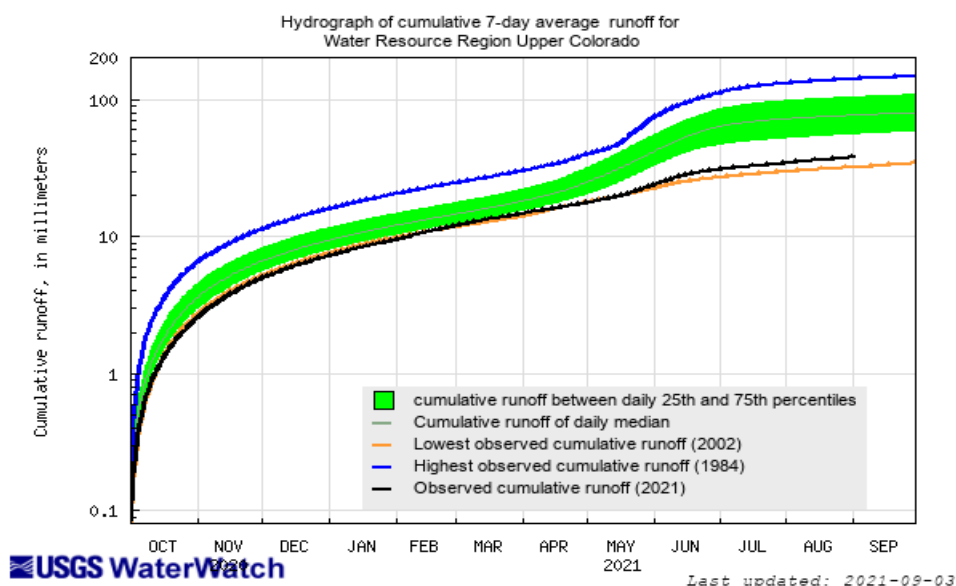
**This is an information item only, with no Board action requested.**

Staff will provide updates to the Board on a number of Colorado River issues, including current hydrology, ongoing implementation of the Drought Contingency Plans, technical considerations, and other issues.

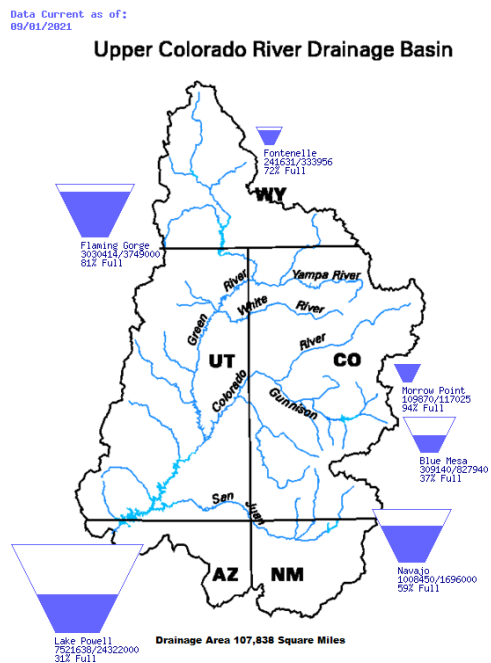
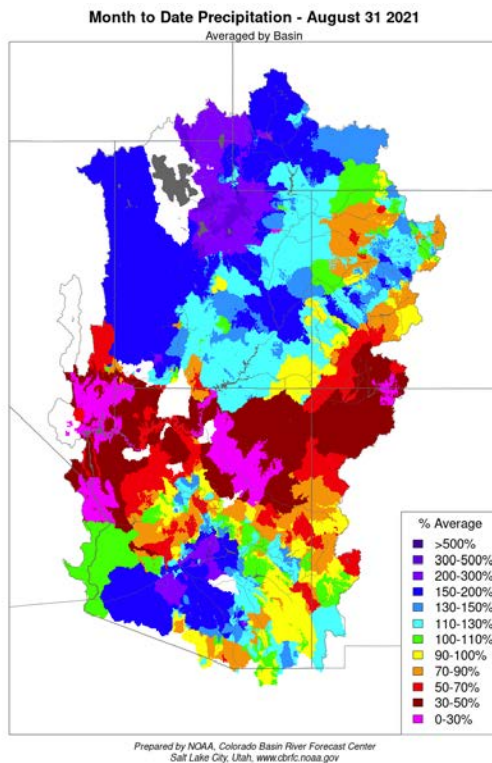
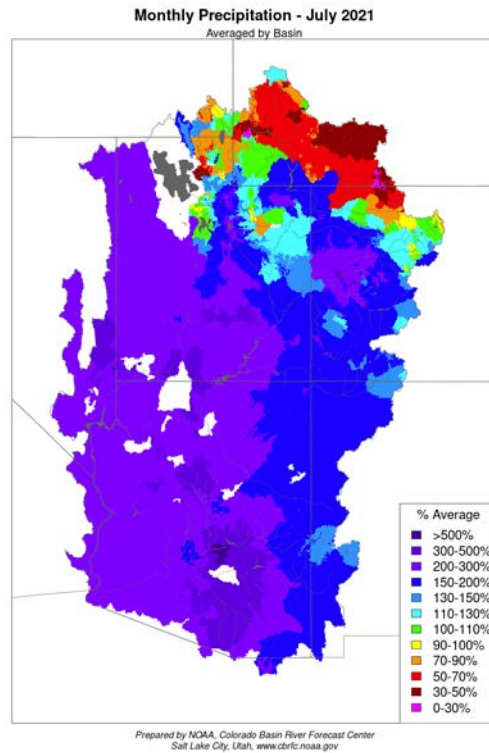
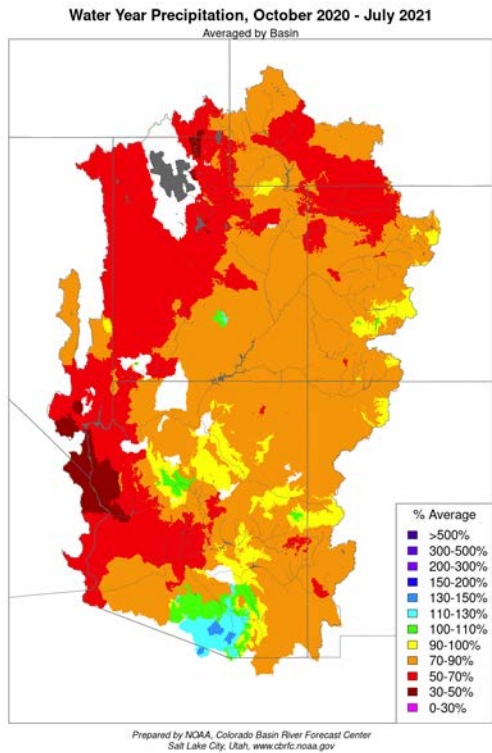
Hydrology and Operations Updates

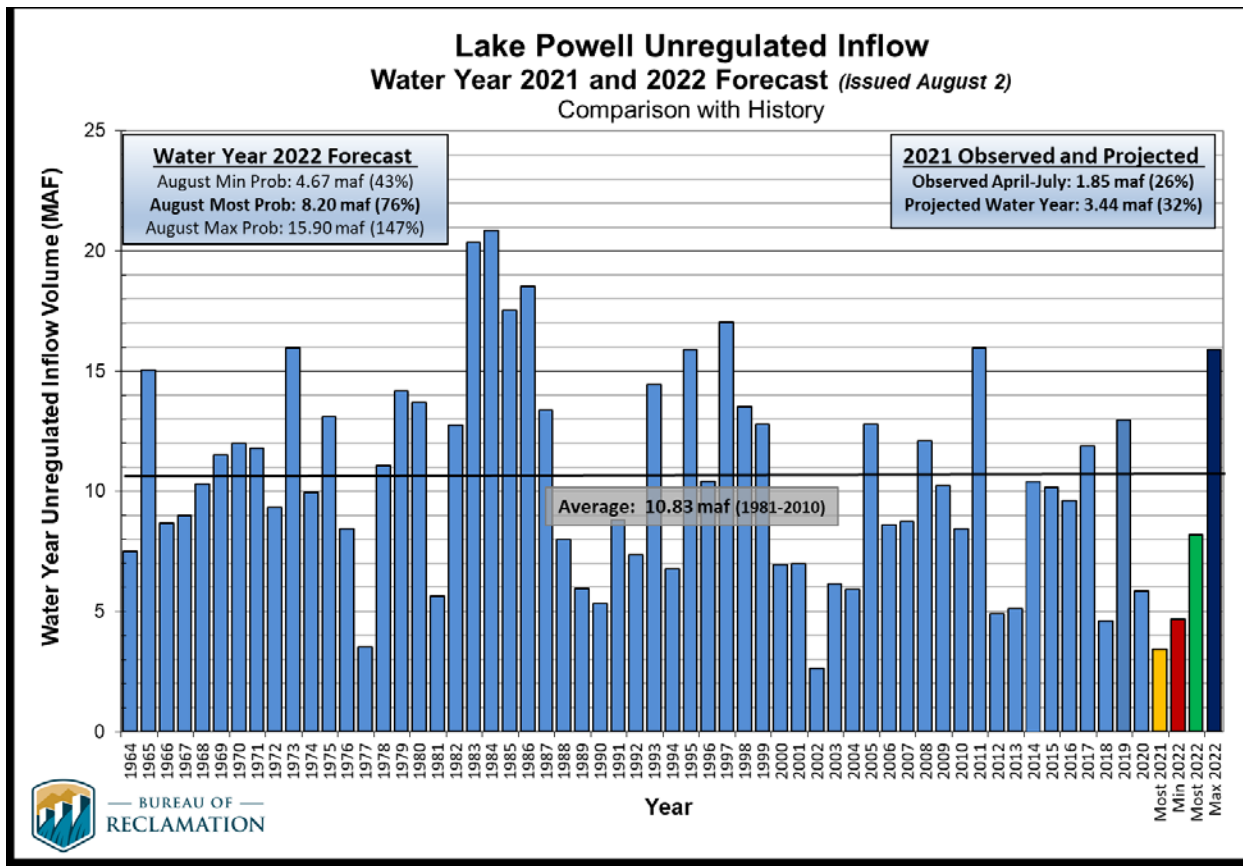
Extremely dry conditions have persisted throughout the Colorado River Basin from summer 2020 to present. Spring snowpack was below average throughout most of the basin. Exceptionally low soil moisture conditions contributed to record low runoff in some locations. Forecasts of Lake Powell inflow continued to decline through July, but increased slightly in August as monsoonal moisture across portions of the basin increased streamflows. Lake Powell inflows remain well below average for WY2021.

Precipitation, Runoff and Storage Conditions



# Precipitation, Runoff and Storage Conditions





Lake Powell released 8.23 MAF in WY2020 and is releasing 8.23 MAF in WY2021. Lake Powell will release 7.48 MAF in WY2022, as determined by Reclamation’s August 2021 24-Month Study.

Projected Lake Powell elevations triggered Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) discussions as part of the Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan. As forecasts continued to decline, in July Reclamation announced it would release an additional 181 KAF from Flaming Gorge, Blue Mesa and Navajo reservoirs through December 2021 to increase storage at Lake Powell under the emergency provisions of DROA. The Upper Basin States are working with Reclamation to develop a DROA plan for 2022. The plan will be finalized in April 2022 if necessitated by hydrologic conditions.

Lake Mead elevations triggered water conservation measures under the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan and Binational Water Scarcity Plan for calendar year 2021. For calendar year 2022, projected Lake Mead elevations from Reclamation’s August 2021 24-Month Study will trigger Level 1 shortage conditions for the Lower Basin and reduced deliveries to Mexico pursuant to Minute 323 for the first time. Water conservation measures under the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan and Binational Water Scarcity Plan will also be required.



Staff will continue to actively monitor this quickly changing situation and provide updates regarding projections and discussions of potential impacts of continued dry conditions.

### Post-2026 Reservoir Operations Negotiations Update

Commissioner Mitchell recognizes the importance of working with water users, Tribal Nations, and non-governmental organizations in developing state strategy, and continues her engagement efforts with these key groups. The states continue to work together to ensure the best and most appropriate tools are available to address the significant short- and long-term challenges facing the basin.

