

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

US-MEXICO COOPERATION

Maria-Elena Giner, U.S. Commissioner
December 16, 2021
Colorado River Water Users Association



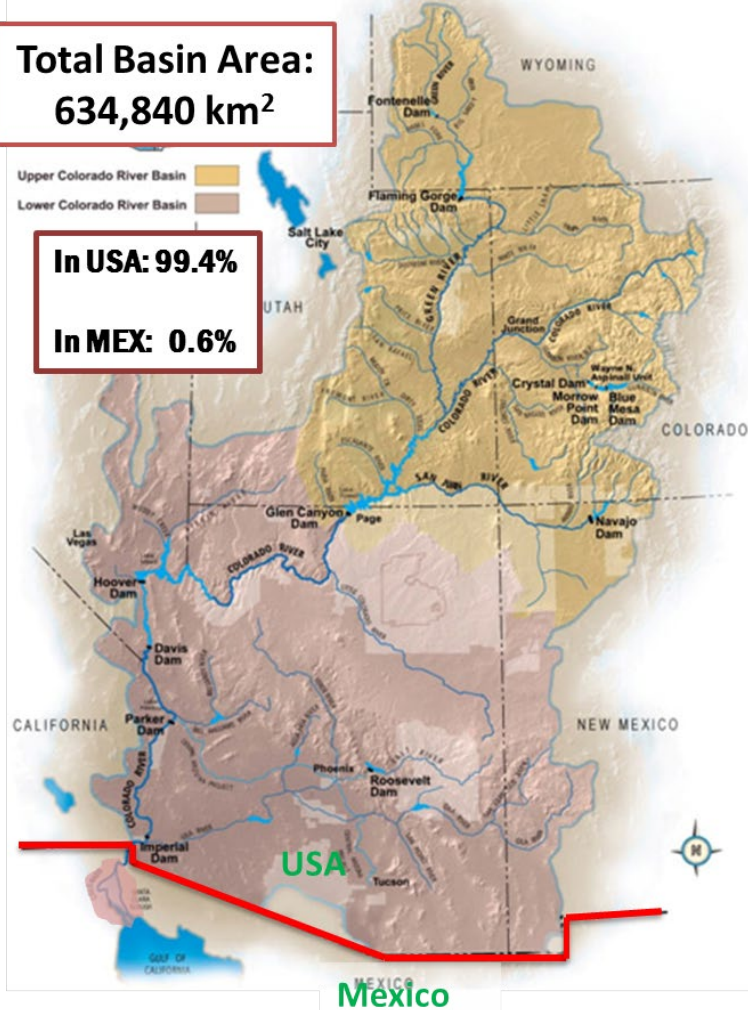
1944 WATER TREATY COLORADO RIVER

Colorado River Basin

Total Basin Area:
634,840 km²

In USA: 99.4%

In MEX: 0.6%



MINUTE 323 – RECENT ACTIVITIES

- ◆ 40+ work group meetings 2020-2021
- ◆ Virtual meetings during the pandemic
- ◆ US-Mexico news release in August 2021 of first-ever reductions in 2022
- ◆ Oct. 2021 briefing on Lower Basin’s “500+ Plan”
- ◆ Agreement to form a US-Mexico work group to discuss potential proactive measures in light of projected decreases in Lake Mead elevation



For immediate release
August 16, 2021

International Boundary and Water Commission
United States and Mexico

COLORADO RIVER DROUGHT TRIGGERS WATER DELIVERY REDUCTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO IN 2022

Colorado River water allocations to users in the United States and Mexico will be reduced in 2022 for the first time since the signing of the 1944 Water Treaty. Reservoir elevation projections by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation for the Colorado River Basin reservoirs indicate the reductions will go into effect next year following the worst 22-year long drought on record, with Lake Mead (Hoover Dam) at its lowest level since it was initially filling in the late 1930s.

The reduction in the allocations will be in accordance with Minute 323, an agreement signed in 2017 by the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC).

The international agreements adopted in Minute 323 recognize that both countries will reduce the use of their annual allotment of Colorado River waters when the January 1 Lake Mead elevation is projected to be at or below 1,075 feet. This is in addition to water savings starting at elevation 1,090 feet or below that will be recoverable when reservoir conditions improve. Today, Reclamation released the August 2021 24-Month Study, which determines the distribution of volumes under low elevation reservoir conditions for 2022, projecting Lake Mead’s January 1, 2022 elevation to be 1065.85 feet or 34% full, a level that triggers both reductions and recoverable savings for both countries.

In 2022, Mexico’s allotment will be reduced by 50,000 acre-feet (62 million cubic meters (mcm)) and, in addition, Mexico will contribute 30,000 acre-feet (37 mcm) of recoverable water savings under the Minute’s Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan (BWSCP). Lower Basin users in the United States will see a reduction of 333,000 acre-feet (411 mcm) and recoverable water savings of 200,000 acre-feet (247 mcm) under domestic policies, known as the 2007 Interim Guidelines and the 2019 Lower Basin



MINUTE 323 – RECENT ACTIVITIES

- ◆ **Work Group on Proactive Measures membership:**
 - ▶ US and Mexican Sections of IBWC
 - ▶ US and Mexican States
 - ▶ Interior
 - ▶ Reclamation
 - ▶ Mexico's Secretariat of Foreign Relations
 - ▶ Mexico's National Water Commission (CONAGUA)



MINUTE 323 – RECENT ACTIVITIES

◆ Work Group Principles:

- ▶ Both countries recognize a **clear need for continued and additional actions.**
- ▶ Both countries benefit from **preventative and proactive** management of the basin.
- ▶ It is in our mutual interests to **proactively address** the potential for unprecedented reductions in the Colorado River.
- ▶ It is important to address the ongoing **drought** and anticipated impacts of **climate change** .
- ▶ Both countries note the importance of **aligning operations** as established in Minute 323 with respect to the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan and the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan.
- ▶ Acknowledges actions by Lower Basin and Interior.



MINUTE 323 – RECENT ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Work group tasks:
 - ▶ Review forecasts through 2026.
 - ▶ Review critical Lake Mead thresholds and **water supply impacts** at various thresholds.
 - ▶ Review and evaluate initial actions being undertaken in the US (the 500+ Plan).
 - ▶ Consider the means to **accelerate Minute 323 investments in conservation projects** in Mexico to maximize creation of Mexico's Water Reserve in 2022 and 2023.



Modernization of Mexico's irrigation infrastructure conserves water.



MINUTE 323 – RECENT ACTIVITIES



**Colorado River at Morelos Dam
at US-Mexico border**

- ◆ Work group tasks:
 - ▶ Review and evaluate potential conservation actions, including following, that would result in **additional water conservation** thru 2026.
 - ▶ Explore actions to **benefit Lake Mead**.
 - ▶ Identify obstacles and strategies to overcome them.
 - ▶ Consult with the binational coalition of NGOs regarding potential **funding for water conservation projects**.



MINUTE 323 – RECENT ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Work group task – develop recommendations for:
 - ▶ Creation of **additional water for Mexico's Water Reserve** in 2022 and 2023 to complement the additional actions being developed in the US.
 - ▶ **Funding** for additional **water conservation projects** in the US and Mexico.
 - ▶ Communications strategies regarding the need for additional conservation in the US and Mexico.

A US-funded canal encasement project in Mexico was completed under Min. 319 to conserve water.



DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

BENEFITS OF MINUTE 323



Lake Mead “bathtub ring”

Photo credit: Reclamation

- ◆ Provides certainty for **water planning**, esp. in shortage
- ◆ Storing Mexico’s water in US **boosts Lake Mead** elevation
- ◆ **Cooperation and transparency** benefit all parties
- ◆ Avoids conflict



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