

# Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the consultation and coordination between Reclamation and specific federal, state, and local agencies, Basin Tribes, and the general public, during the preparation of this Draft EIS. A detailed listing of these coordination and consultation activities will be provided in the Final EIS.

## 4.2 General Public Involvement Activities

The public involvement process leading to this Draft EIS included a “pre-scoping” effort, scoping, consultation, and coordination with Basin Tribes, Basin States, federal and state agencies, water users, water conservation districts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other interested stakeholders, and the public. Reclamation developed and implemented a public involvement plan to satisfy the public participation requirements set forth in NEPA and to establish a consistent and constant level of engagement with interested parties and stakeholders. The multifaceted approach consisted of informational materials, consultation and coordination meetings, general and stakeholder outreach, and media relations.

A variety of informational materials were used to educate and inform audiences about the process and related issues. A [website](#) was established and maintained for this EIS process. It contains project documents, points of contact, and recordings of public meetings. An electronic mailing list was used to notify interested parties of website postings, project meetings, and documents. A project email account was maintained throughout the preparation of this Draft EIS for interested parties to express opinions, ask questions, and submit comments.

Reclamation discussed the development of the proposed federal action with various agencies and organizations at: (1) agency/organization regular meetings; (2) public conferences and events sponsored by the agencies/organizations; and (3) meetings sponsored by Reclamation. The entities included the Basin States’ water resource departments, water agencies within these states, contractors and associations for federal hydroelectric power, and NGOs. Reclamation also consulted with Indian tribes and Mexico. A detailed listing of the agencies and organizations that were invited to such meetings, met with Reclamation, and/or invited Reclamation to their meetings or events will be provided in the Final EIS.

A synopsis of the NEPA-related outreach efforts for this EIS follows:

Before formally initiating the NEPA process, in June 2022, Reclamation conducted a public “pre-scoping” effort requesting input on suggested mechanisms to ensure a wide range of stakeholder participation in the process and potential substantive elements to be considered for post-2026

operations.<sup>1</sup> Using the input received, on June 16, 2023, Reclamation published an NOI to prepare an EIS in the in the *Federal Register* ([88 Federal Register 39455](#)), formally initiating the public scoping process. Reclamation notified interested parties of the NOI and scoping comment period through an email notification to the project mailing list on June 16, 2023. Over the 60-day scoping period, Reclamation engaged with stakeholders through public webinars, tribal consultations, and technical education sessions.

Reclamation held three virtual public webinars during the scoping period. One meeting was attended by 185 people on July 17, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. mountain daylight time. The second virtual public meeting was attended by 112 people on July 18, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The third virtual public meeting was attended by 66 people on July 24, 2023, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. mountain daylight time. The webinars included an opening statement, a presentation that summarized the NOI, a range of hydrologic and operational scenarios that informed people about the EIS analysis, an overview of potential alternatives being considered in the EIS, information on the EIS process schedule, and a question-and-answer session. The webinars were recorded and published on the [project website](#).<sup>2</sup> Public comments were accepted during the comment period by email and mail. Reclamation received a total of 24,290 comment letters from a wide range of interested parties, including federal, state, and local entities; tribes; NGOs; other stakeholder groups; and individuals. A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the [Scoping Report](#) (Reclamation 2023b) was published in October 2023 in the *Federal Register* ([88 Federal Register 72535](#)), summarizing all public comments received during the scoping period.

This Draft EIS is available for public review on the project website at <http://www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/post2026/>. Reclamation will hold virtual open house meetings to provide opportunities to learn more about the project, provide analysis, speak with Reclamation managers and resource specialists, ask questions, and provide comments. Public comments will be accepted for 45 calendar days following the EPA's publication of the NOA in the *Federal Register*. Comments may be provided by email to [crbpost2026@usbr.gov](mailto:crbpost2026@usbr.gov) or by mail to:

Bureau of Reclamation  
Attn: BCOO-1000  
P.O. Box 61470  
Boulder City, NV 89006

### 4.3 Cooperating Agency Involvement

In compliance with NEPA, Reclamation worked with five cooperating agencies in the preparation of this EIS. As described in **Chapter 1**, cooperating agencies included the BIA, NPS, FWS, USIBWC, and WAPA. In developing the Draft EIS, Reclamation hosted bi-weekly cooperating agency virtual

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<sup>1</sup> The pre-scoping period began with a Federal Register notice on June 24, 2022 ([87 Federal Register 37884](#)). The Department received substantial feedback from partners, stakeholders and the public which Reclamation summarized in a [Pre-Scoping Summary Report](#) (Reclamation 2023a).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/post2026/index.html>

meetings to obtain data, information, resource analysis, and review internal documents. Additionally, individual agencies provided specific assistance, including the following:

- The BIA administers the federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes.
- Given its jurisdiction of NPS units within the Basin and administration of recreation on Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the NPS provided data and analysis of potential impacts on resources under its management.
- The FWS has jurisdiction by law and special expertise with respect to the ESA and biological resources within the study area and its administration of several wildlife refuges in the study area. The FWS is providing resource expertise and is working closely with Reclamation in developing biological assessments to support consultation under Section 7 of the ESA.
- The USIBWC provided guidance and reviewed internal documents to ensure the EIS adequately addressed treaty obligations and international commitments. The USIBWC has worked with Reclamation to ensure that Mexico has been kept informed of all permissibly available information regarding the EIS process.
- The WAPA provided hourly release volume models for Glen Canyon Dam to aid in resource-specific modeling. The WAPA also provided hydroelectric modeling to assess impacts on power generation and revenue across the major generation facilities in the Upper and Lower Basins.

While not a cooperating agency, the USGS also contributed extensive expertise and resource modeling support.

## **4.4 Tribal Consultation and Coordination**

For purposes of this NEPA process, Reclamation is consulting and coordinating with Basin Tribes who have entitlements to or contracts for Colorado River water and those that may be affected by or have interests in the proposed federal action. Tribes provided Reclamation with written comments on the proposed federal action and its potential effects on resources of tribal concern, including Indian Trust Assets. Reclamation's tribal engagement strategy is comprised of three approaches to tribal coordination and consultation: 1) Reclamation-hosted monthly virtual meetings for all Basin Tribes where updates on the process are provided, 2) regularly attending tribal meetings upon request, such as the Ten Tribes Partnership or the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, and 3) engaging in and initiating government-to-government consultations. In addition, Reclamation convened a group of interested Basin Tribes throughout 2024 and 2025 to discuss proposed management strategies which ultimately informed the development of the Enhanced Coordination Alternative. Reclamation has provided the Basin Tribes technical support during these discussions by modeling various strategies, including protection of key elevations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

## 4.5 Endangered Species Act Consultation

A Biological Assessment for annual releases from Glen Canyon Dam is anticipated to be completed in the spring of 2026, with a Biological Opinion issued before the ROD. This Biological Opinion will replace the existing 2007 and subsequent 2024 Interim Guidelines Biological Opinions (FWS 2007, 2024); the 2016 Glen Canyon Dam LTEMP Biological Opinion (FWS 2016), which considers monthly, daily, and hourly release volumes, will remain in effect. Section 7 consultations for current and future operations from Lake Mead to the SIB with Mexico were conducted in [2005](#), [2018](#), [2022](#), and [2024](#), and those Biological Opinions will cover implementation of the ROD for those reaches (FWS 2005, 2018, 2022, 2024). An amendment to the LCR MSCP Habitat Conservation Plan and an associated Biological Assessment are currently being developed, with an anticipated completion in January 2028, to extend Section 7 and Section 10 consultation incidental take coverage for the LCR MSCP's Federal and non-Federal parties until 2055.

## 4.6 State and Local Water and Power Agency Coordination

Since the June 13, 2023 *Federal Register* notice announcing Reclamation's interest in soliciting comments on the development of the Post-2026 EIS, Reclamation has had various discussions with state and local water agencies regarding the proposed federal action. However, the Basin States have been continuously engaged in drought mitigation discussions related to post-2026 operations since the adoption of the 2019 DCPs. Reclamation has provided the Basin States technical support during these discussions by modeling various strategies, including protection of key elevations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

As they did for the 2007 Interim Guidelines NEPA process, the Basin States informed the projections of future depletions of Colorado River water anticipated in each state for this Post-2026 process. The Upper Colorado River Commission compiled Upper Basin depletions and submitted to Reclamation, and Reclamation consulted with the Lower Division states regarding their respective depletions. These projections were used as input to Reclamation's operational modeling analysis, as discussed in this EIS.

The Upper Division States and Lower Division States each submitted proposals for alternatives to be considered in the Draft EIS in the spring of 2024. The Upper Division States submitted a revised proposal in December 2024, and the Lower Division States submitted a revised proposal in January 2025. Reclamation worked extensively with the Basin States to not only understand and gather additional information, but also to model and perform detailed preliminary analyses of their original and revised proposals. Reclamation discussed these results and potential refinements on numerous occasions with the Basin States.

Reclamation and the Department have engaged extensively with the Basin States to facilitate an agreement among the seven Basin States and the Secretary on various aspects of post-2026 operations for consideration in this NEPA process. Despite this extensive engagement, a consensus-based approach to Basin reservoir operations has not yet been achieved and therefore, Reclamation has not identified a Preferred Alternative in this Draft EIS. Given the importance of a consensus-

based approach to operations in terms of the stability of the system, the Department will continue to pursue an agreement among various Basin entities.

## 4.7 Non-Government Organizations

Reclamation contacted and coordinated the preparation of this Draft EIS with multiple recreational and environmental groups. A consortium of environmental organizations that included the National Audubon Society, Western Resource Advocates, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, American Rivers, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, and Trout Unlimited developed what became the Maximum Operational Flexibility Alternative analyzed in this Draft EIS. This consortium of environmental organizations developed and submitted its first proposal, “Cooperative Conservation Alternative,” on March 29, 2024. As with the Upper Division and Lower Division States proposals, Reclamation worked extensively with these organizations to not only understand and gather additional information, but also to model and perform detailed preliminary analyses of their proposal. From 2024 through 2025, Reclamation met with representatives of the consortium of environmental organizations and worked with them to formulate what became the Maximum Operational Flexibility Alternative, as analyzed herein.

## 4.8 Other Consultations

Per Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), Reclamation is consulting with the Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah SHPOs; THPOs; affected tribes without THPOs; and consulting parties regarding the effects of the undertaking on historic properties. Reclamation is developing a project specific programmatic agreement, in consultation with the SHPOs, THPOs, tribes without THPOs, cooperating agencies, and other consulting parties per 36 CFR 800.14 to outline a process to resolve any adverse effect on historic properties from Reclamation’s operation of the Glen Canyon and Hoover dams under the new operating guidelines for annual releases.

## 4.9 Consultations with the Government of Mexico Agencies

The USIBWC has engaged in consultation with agencies of Mexico regarding the proposed federal action. Reclamation has assisted USIBWC in conducting this consultation by providing information on the proposed federal action and by participating in briefings with the Mexican Section of the IBWC, the Mexico National Water Commission, and Mexico Secretariat of Foreign Relations. Consistent with these consultations, Section 397 of Public Law 109-432 directs Reclamation to use these treaty-related processes to identify potential impacts beyond the borders of the United States. Accordingly, meetings with representatives of Mexico were conducted, during which representatives of Mexico provided their views, input, and concerns regarding the potential effects of the proposed federal action.

This Draft EIS documents the hydrologic and water quality effects of the proposed federal action on water deliveries to Mexico (see **Chapter 3** and **Appendix M**, International Border Region of the

Colorado River). Reclamation's modeling assumptions in this Draft EIS are not intended to constitute an interpretation or application of the 1944 Water Treaty or to represent current United States policy or a determination of future United States policy regarding deliveries to Mexico. The United States will conduct all necessary and appropriate discussions regarding the proposed federal action and implementation of the 1944 Water Treaty with Mexico through the IBWC in consultation with the Department of State.