



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

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COLORADO RIVER BINATIONAL WATER SCARCITY CONTINGENCY PLAN SAVINGS IN EFFECT IN 2021

Water users in the United States and Mexico will conserve specific volumes of water in 2021 in accordance with the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan (BWSCP) and U.S. Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP), the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) has announced. Reservoir projections by the United States Bureau of Reclamation indicate these Plans, described in a 2017 IBWC agreement known as Minute 323, will be triggered in 2021, responding to the worst 21-year drought on record.

The international agreements adopted in Minute 323 recognize that both countries will cut their annual allocations when Lake Mead reaches elevation 1,075 feet or below. At elevation 1,090 feet or below, they will undertake voluntary water savings that are recoverable when reservoir conditions improve. Forecasts in Reclamation's August 24-month study, which determines 2021 operations, project Lake Mead's January 1, 2021 elevation at 1085.28 feet, an elevation that triggers recoverable savings under the BWSCP.

In accordance with Minute 323, in 2021 Mexico will save 41,000 acre-feet (51 million cubic meters [mcm]) of water under the BWSCP, while the United States will save 200,000 acre-feet (247 mcm) of water under the DCP. These water savings are recoverable when Lake Mead conditions improve. The United States and Mexico adopted the BWSCP to reduce the risk of temporary or prolonged interruptions in water supplies that would result in adverse impacts on the society, environment, and economy of the Colorado River system in both nations.

The BWSCP and DCP, which both became effective in 2019, are working to substantially reduce risks to the system and all who rely on the Colorado River. One year ago, the August 2019 24-month study identified BWSCP and DCP conditions for 2020 – for the first time ever. However, conditions improved slightly after August, so, in accordance with Minute 323, Mexico made arrangements to conserve 41,000 acre-feet (51 mcm) in 2020 as Mexico’s Water Reserve, which offers Mexico more opportunities to use that water than when it is tied up as recoverable water savings under the BWSCP.

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