



## **International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico**

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### **COLORADO RIVER BINATIONAL WATER SCARCITY CONTINGENCY PLAN SAVINGS TO TAKE EFFECT IN 2020**

Water users in the United States and Mexico will conserve specific volumes of water in 2020 in accordance with the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan and U.S. Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan, the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) has announced. Reservoir projections by the United States Bureau of Reclamation indicate the recently-adopted plans, described in Minute 323, a 2017 IBWC agreement, will be triggered for the first time in 2020, responding to the worst 20-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, and, at elevation 1,090 feet or below, will undertake voluntary water savings that are recoverable when reservoir conditions improve. Forecasts in Reclamation's August 24-month study, which determines 2020 operations, project Lake Mead's January 1, 2020 elevation at 1089.4 feet, an elevation that triggers recoverable savings under the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan.

In accordance with Minute 323, in 2020 Mexico will save 41,000 acre-feet (51 million cubic meters [mcm]) of water under the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan, while the United States will save 200,000 acre-feet (247 mcm) of water under the U.S. Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan. These water savings are recoverable when reservoir conditions improve. The United States and Mexico adopted the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan 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.

Previous reservoir forecasts had indicated the possibility of additional nonrecoverable reductions to Lower Basin users in both countries. The Upper Basin experienced above-average snowpack in 2019 and runoff was 145% of the 30-year average this past spring. Total Colorado River system storage is 55% of capacity, up from 49% at this time last year. The U.S. Drought Contingency Plan and the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan, which both became effective this year, are now in place and working to substantially reduce risks to the system and all that rely on the Colorado River. Despite the above-average 2019 snowpack, the Colorado River Basin continues to experience the worst 20-year drought on record, dating back to 2000. This 20-year period is also one of the driest in the 1,200-year paleo record.

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