



Colorado River Authority of Utah

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE



Dear Governor Cox and Legislative Management Committee,

The Colorado River has always required those who depend on it to think beyond the present and adapt to uncertainty. Over a century ago, the negotiators who signed the 1922 Colorado River Compact knew that careful planning would be essential to sustain communities across the West. Today, Utah faces decisions just as consequential.

Negotiations among the seven Basin States and the federal government are intensifying as we approach decisions that will define how water is shared for years to come. The post-2026 operations of Lake Powell, Lake Mead, and the broader Colorado River system hang in the balance.

Utah enters this decisive period exceptionally well prepared. The Colorado River Authority has invested strategically in state-of-the-art measurement tools and forecasting capabilities, pioneered innovative conservation and drought-mitigation programs, and forged strong partnerships with agricultural producers, local community leaders, elected officials, municipal providers, Tribal nations, and neighboring states.

The challenges are undeniable: shrinking flows, rising demand, and deep disagreements among Basin States. But Utah's path forward is clear. We will advocate relentlessly for outcomes that respect Utah's ability to grow into its Colorado River apportionment while satisfying our obligations under the Colorado River Compact. This will enable Utah to ensure reliable water supplies for future generations.

As the saying goes, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." Through careful planning, strategic vision, and unwavering leadership, Utah is positioned to shape a future where the Colorado River continues to sustain our people, economy, and way of life.

The work ahead requires steadfast commitment, but Utah has never been better positioned to secure our water future. With the foundation we've built and the partnerships we've forged, we will ensure the Colorado River continues to serve Utah's communities, agriculture, and economy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy I. Haas". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amy I. Haas

Executive Director, Colorado River Authority of Utah



Authority Board



Gene Shawcroft

Chair

Colorado River
Commissioner of Utah

Central Utah Area: Salt Lake,
Utah, Juab, Sanpete, Summit,
and Wasatch Counties



Dan Larsen

Uinta Basin Area: Duchesne
and Uinta Counties



Joel Ferry

Vice Chair

Governor's Appointee



Paul Tsosie

Tribal Representative



Zach Renstrom

Virgin River Area: Kane and
Washington Counties



Jay Mark Humphrey

Price and San Rafael Area:
Carbon and Emery Counties



Candice Hasenyager

State of Utah Area: Remaining
Utah Colorado River users

Authority Staff

Amy I. Haas

Executive Director

Betsy Coleman

Executive Assistant

Cody Stewart

Director of Strategic Engagement

Holly McCall

Support Services Coordinator

Marty Carpenter

Director of Communication

Lily Bosworth

Staff Engineer

Betsy Morgan

Staff Engineer

Marc Stilson

Principal Engineer

Wendy Crowther

Assistant Attorney General

Logan Anderson

*Manager of Administration
and Finance*

Intrastate Colorado River Authority of Utah Activities

1

A COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN



On April 21, 2022 the Colorado River Authority of Utah (Authority) approved a five-year Management Plan to accomplish its statutory mission to “protect, use, conserve and develop Utah’s waters of the Colorado River system.”

The Management Plan promotes a shared and resilient water supply to support a vibrant and prosperous Utah. The Management Plan provides a suite of adaptable technical and legal strategies that protect and support the farms, homes, businesses, environment, and quality of life that all Utahns enjoy.

The initial term of the Management Plan is five years, beginning July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2027 (FY23- FY27). The Management Plan is meant to be dynamic to respond to changing hydrology and conditions in the Colorado River Basin. The Management Plan also will support the various interstate Colorado River activities and commitments that require the involvement of the River Commissioner and Authority staff.



The Management Plan encompasses the following three priority areas:

Measurement

We cannot effectively manage what we cannot measure. We must improve, expand, and support a water measurement network that delivers sound and transparent data.

Hydrology & Operations

It is essential that we continually improve our understanding of hydrologic conditions, enhance our ability to make informed planning and policy recommendations, and identify opportunities to improve water management.

Drought Mitigation

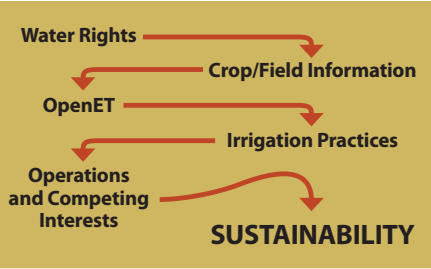
Prudent water management requires measures that prepare us for and enable us to respond to water shortages. It is critical that Utah invest in researching and developing solutions that are adaptable and that enable a sustainable and resilient water supply for the Colorado River Basin.

B ANNUAL WORK PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

In accordance with the Management Plan, annual work plans are developed and approved by the Authority board. The work plans include activity details, estimated budgets, and time frames for each of the five years comprising the initial term of the Management Plan.

On June 17, 2025, the Authority Board approved the Fiscal Year 2026 Work Plan detailing the specific activities required to implement the Management Plan in Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026). The approved annual work plan budget for Fiscal Year 2026 was \$10,675,100, which includes a combination of technical activities, research activities, and instrument purchases for the year consistent with the FY 2026 Work Plan.

Highlighted Efforts



Provisional Accounting

At the beginning of irrigation season 2025, the Authority initiated provisional accounting activities to measure and track water conserved under the Utah Demand Management Pilot Program. This type of accounting is made possible through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in December 2024 between the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Upper Division States of Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico and Colorado. Additional United States Geological Survey stream gages were installed to aid in this effort. A key premise of the MOU is that the Upper Division States will seek credit for any water generated by qualifying activities that flows into and is stored within Upper Colorado River Basin reservoirs.

Utah Diversion Measurement and Telemetry

The Utah Diversion Measurement and Telemetry Program (UDMT) is a federally funded, collaborative initiative between the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) and the Authority. The intent of the UDMT is to enhance water monitoring infrastructure across the Upper Colorado River system within the state of Utah by installing real-time measurement and telemetry devices on diversion structures. This effort supports the 2019 Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan and is funded through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The UDMT Program will offer application cycles for projects which will then be selected for funding, engineering support, and installation of flow meters and associated telemetry. The first application cycle is anticipated in late fall of 2025.

Utah Colorado River Accounting and Forecasting

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Authority completed development of Utah Colorado River Accounting and Forecasting – Decision Support Tool (UCRAF-DST) for the Duchesne, Price, and San Rafael River Basins. The UCRAF-DST is a suite of drought mitigation planning tools that enable the Authority to understand how drought mitigation measures impact water availability and water rights within a river system. Under the Fiscal Year 2026 Work Plan, the Authority Board approved the continued development of the UCRAF-DST for the Diversion Runoff Calculator, Brush Creek and Ashley Creek systems, and the mainstem of the Colorado River and Green River.



C FISCAL YEAR 2026 ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The Authority's third annual work plan was approved by the Board on June 17, 2025 for Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026). This work plan supports:

- Participation in intrastate and interstate Colorado River commitments
- Investigation and analysis of water supply and use measurement gaps
- Installation and maintenance of agricultural consumptive use measurement instrumentation to improve accuracy of remote sensing technology and other water use efficiency efforts
- Acquisition of consumptive use data using satellite-based remote sensing technology
- Research supporting water supply forecasting improvements
- Research supporting water use optimization and demand reduction
- Drought mitigation pilot projects
- Development of an accounting and forecasting model for the Colorado River System in Utah
- Modeling to evaluate effectiveness of proposed operations under the Drought Response Operating Agreement (DROA), other operations related to the 2019 Drought Contingency Plans (DCP), and/or emergency actions taken in response to river conditions in the short to mid-term
- Modeling to evaluate long-term Colorado River operating policy
- Oversight of Authority Advisory Councils

Activities and work plan elements described herein are supported by funding from several sources including annual appropriations and one-time appropriations to the Authority, federal funding, in-kind goods and services provided to the Authority by users of the Colorado River System, and appropriations supporting activities performed by the Department of Natural Resources in coordination with the Authority (Table 1).

Table 1: FY26 Work Plan Budget Summary

Section	Work Plan Element	FY26 Budget ¹	Funding Source ²
INTERSTATE & INTRASTATE ACTIVITIES			
3	Personnel	\$1,536,700	Annual Appropriations
3	Travel	\$70,000	Annual Appropriations
4	Advisory Councils	\$255,000	Annual Appropriations
MEASUREMENT			
5.2	Instrumentation & Measurement	\$500,000	One-Time Appropriation
		\$1,226,000	Federal Funding
5.3	Utah Flux Network	\$137,000	One-Time Appropriation
		\$62,000	Federal Funding / In-Kind
5.4	OpenET	\$780,000	One-Time Appropriation
5.6	Provisional Accounting	\$100,000	Annual Appropriations
HYDROLOGY & OPERATIONS			
6.1	Short- and Mid-term Operations Modeling	\$95,000	In-Kind Contribution
6.2	Long-term Operations Modeling	\$312,000	In-Kind Contribution
6.4	Climate & Hydrology Research & Instrumentation	\$30,000	One-Time Appropriation
		\$15,000	Federal Funding
6.5	Snowpack, Runoff, & Operations Pilot Project & Research	\$201,000	One-Time Appropriation
		\$109,000	In-Kind Contribution
		\$307,000	Federal Funding
6.6	Snow Temperature Profile (Cold Content) Sensors	\$31,400	Federal Funding
DROUGHT MITIGATION			
7.2	Emery County Irrigation Efficiency Study	\$167,000	Federal Funding
7.3–7.5	UCRAF (<i>Duchesne, San Rafael, Price River, Ashley & Brush, Colorado River System</i>)	\$641,000	One-Time Appropriation
7.6	Demand Management Pilot Program	\$3,100,000	One-Time Appropriation
7.7	AG-DRIP Pilot Program	\$500,000	One-Time Appropriation
		\$500,000	In-Kind Contribution
TOTAL		\$10,675,100	

1. Federal funding sources include the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act and WaterSMART.
2. The totals provided for under this Work Plan are estimates for FY26. Budgets are subject to adjustment depending on conditions and activities in the Colorado River Basin that may be unknown when the budget was developed.



Background:

UCA 63M-14-209 authorizes the Authority to create advisory councils to provide “*data, information, and input... relevant to the mission and objectives of the authority.*” In 2021, the Authority Board adopted an advisory council rule to help guide council operations. The rule instructed the councils to focus on two broad objectives: 1) *Hear broad input, including recommendations, data and information regarding all matters affecting Utah’s Colorado River system water;* and 2) *Make recommendations to the Authority Board in an advisory capacity.*

Fiscal Year 2025 Progress:

In 2025, the Authority’s Advisory Councils continued to strengthen the connection between local perspectives and statewide decision-making. The five councils—Northern, Central, Southeastern, Southwestern, and Agriculture—remained active forums where Utahns shared ideas, evaluated proposals, and provided feedback to Authority leadership on the pressing challenges facing the Colorado River.

Key Activities:

Annual Recommendations

Each council delivered recommendations to the Authority Board in early 2025. These focused on protecting Utah’s Colorado River allocation, accelerating investment in measurement infrastructure, exploring storage opportunities, and preparing conservation and demand management options to safeguard the state’s long-term interests and obligations.

Agriculture Council Expansion

Building on the momentum of its 2024 launch, the Agriculture Council broadened outreach to producers statewide, expanded membership, and encouraged greater public engagement. Discussions centered on the post-2026 negotiations, demand management, curtailment scenarios, and ensuring that conserved consumptive use is properly accounted for under Compact rules.

Field Engagement

Council members joined Authority staff on site visits in Duchesne County, the San Rafael River, Moab, and in other locations throughout the state. These visits provided firsthand context on local conditions and helped shape more practical, grounded recommendations.

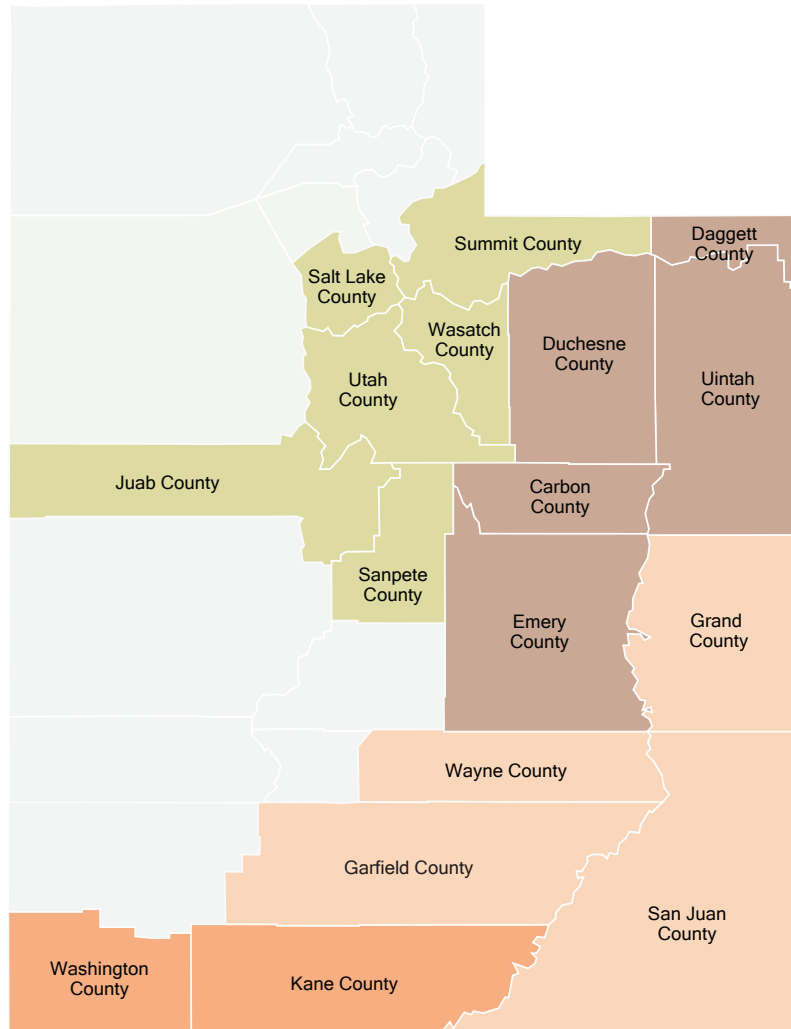
Annual “Touch Water” Float Trip

Continuing a tradition started in 2024, in August 2025 the Councils hosted a two-day float trip on the Colorado River mainstem in Moab. The event brought together state legislators, Grand County commissioners, congressional staff, industry representatives, council members, Authority staff, media, and local residents. The experience deepened



STATEWIDE

Farm Bureau
Members



NORTHERN

- Salt Lake County
- Summit County
- Utah County
- Wasatch County
- Juab County
- Sanpete County

CENTRAL

- Daggett County
- Duchesne County
- Uintah County
- Carbon County
- Emery County
- Grand County

SOUTHERN

Southeastern

- Garfield County
- Grand County
- Wayne County
- San Juan County

Southwestern

- Washington County
- Kane County

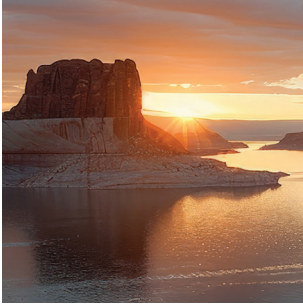
participants’ understanding of local water issues, fostered candid dialogue on policy and rural Utah’s concerns, and underscored the urgency of Utah’s Colorado River challenges. Time spent on the river also strengthened relationships and built a shared foundation for future decision-making.

Policy Integration

Insights from the Advisory Councils informed Utah’s contributions to post-2026 negotiations and influenced the design and implementation of demand management pilot projects.

Summary

The Advisory Councils remain a cornerstone of the Colorado River Authority of Utah. Their continued involvement and engagement help to ensure that community voices, stakeholder perspectives, and local expertise guide collaborative, practical decisions about the Colorado River’s future.



The Authority sustained an aggressive outreach campaign in 2025 to expand public understanding of its activities and raise awareness of Colorado River issues.

Monthly Newsletter

The Authority's flagship monthly newsletter offers concise summaries and commentary on national, interstate, and state-level developments affecting the Colorado River and Utah. Specifically targeted to policymakers, council members, and stakeholders, it is a key tool for sharing timely updates and analysis.

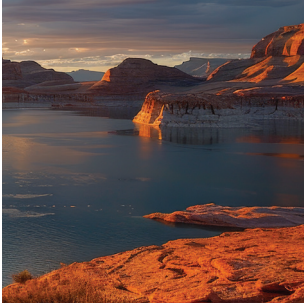
Distilled News

This biweekly news service highlights three to four critical stories on the Colorado River, providing additional resources for readers seeking deeper coverage. Distilled News helps general audiences navigate information overload while tracking the most important developments in Colorado River management.



Media Engagement

The Authority pursued proactive media relations, regularly inviting reporters to Advisory Council meetings, facilitating interviews with key staff, and providing access to field tours. This transparent approach ensured comprehensive and timely media coverage while improving public accountability and addressing citizen questions.



The 2025 Utah General Session reaffirmed the state's commitment to playing a strong role in Colorado River negotiations and to equipping the Authority with the tools needed to succeed. While lawmakers considered several dozen water-related bills, two measures—H.B. 520 and H.B. 311—carried particular implications for Authority operations. Most significant, however, was H.J.R. 9, the resolution that spoke most directly to Utah's position on the Colorado River.

House Joint Resolution 9 (H.J.R. 9)

The most significant state legislative action from this session was H.J.R. 9, sponsored by Representative Casey Snider, which passed the House unanimously. This resolution affirmed three critical assertions:

1. Reaffirmed Utah's commitment to the interstate compact governing the Colorado River
2. Emphasized the fundamental importance of protecting Utah's water allocation
3. Declared Utah and each Basin state's sovereign right to utilize its Colorado River allocation anywhere within its boundaries

Federal Legislative Developments

There were several federal pieces of legislation that the Authority monitored closely this year. The following two primary bills relevant to the Authority's mission and charge were introduced in Congress in 2025:

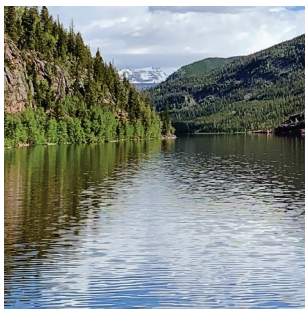
1. ***H.R. 231 – Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act of 2025***
Extends the System Conservation Pilot Program through 2026, enabling voluntary, compensated conservation efforts that reduce use and strengthen storage as post-2026 negotiations progress.
2. ***S. 935 / H.R. 2025 – Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act***
Ratifies a settlement resolving Navajo, Hopi, and San Juan Southern Paiute claims. Authorizes more than \$5 billion for pipelines and delivery systems, confirms tribal water rights, and permits limited leasing off-reservation.

Ongoing Commitment

The Authority remains actively engaged in monitoring and influencing both state and federal legislation that affects Utah's rights, obligations, and interests under the Colorado River Compact and the Upper Colorado River Basin Compact. This legislative engagement ensures Utah maintains its strong voice in both regional and national water policy development.

Interstate Colorado River Authority of Utah Activities 2

A POST-2026 OPERATIONAL CRITERIA



The current operational criteria for Lake Powell and Lake Mead (the 2007 Interim Guidelines) are scheduled to expire in 2026 (September 30, 2026). The 2007 Interim Guidelines establish the coordinated operations of the two reservoirs and set the conditions for Lower Basin shortage. Establishing new criteria occurs within a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. On June 15, 2023, the Department of Interior, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the post-2026 operational guidelines. On August 15, 2023, the Authority submitted comments on the NOI on behalf of the state of Utah. The Authority also participated in the drafting of comment letters submitted by both the seven Colorado River Basin States and by the four Upper Division States of Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico.

In March 2024, the Upper Division States jointly submitted a proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation for consideration and evaluation as an alternative for post-2026 operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. A proposal was also submitted by the Lower Division States. The Authority has played a significant role in providing modeling and other technical expertise in the development of the Upper Division State proposal to the benefit of all four Upper Division States.

During 2025, the seven Colorado River Basin states continued to negotiate a consensus plan for post-2026 operations for submittal to the Bureau of Reclamation as an alternative for consideration in the ongoing NEPA process. The Utah River Commissioner, assisted by the Executive Director of the Authority, represents Utah in these negotiations. The Bureau of Reclamation anticipates releasing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in December 2025 and a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision in mid-2026.

B FEDERAL FUNDING

Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) significant federal funding has been made available for projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin. The IIJA provides \$50 million to support the Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan, including improvements in water measurement. The IRA provides \$450 million in the Upper Basin for drought mitigation including water conservation and environmental/ecological projects as well as funding for the Upper Basin System Conservation Program in 2023 and 2024. The Authority continues to work with the Upper Division States, the Upper Colorado River Commission, and the Bureau of Reclamation to identify, select, and fund projects in the Upper Basin that will result in conserved water.

C 2025-2026 UTAH DEMAND MANAGEMENT PILOT PROGRAM



To proactively plan for and respond to drought in the Colorado River Basin, Utah needs a water conservation program to facilitate a reduction in consumptive water use by agricultural producers on a temporary, voluntary, compensated, and protected basis. Conservation undertaken in the program must both maintain viable agricultural communities and support continued compliance with the Colorado River Compact.

The 2025-2026 Utah Demand Management Pilot Program tests the application of Utah Code 73-3-30 (4) (as amended in 2023 through S.B. 144), which empowers the state engineer to authorize and distribute conserved water in a qualifying program as confirmed by the Authority. The Program is administered by the Authority in close coordination with other state water agencies and programs, with support from Jacobs Engineering Group and subconsultants. The Program has five objectives:

1. Reduce water depletion
2. Quantify water depletion reduction
3. Understand conditions under which water users will participate
4. Identify the state and federal regulatory processes that ensure conserved water depletion can be distributed and stored in a pre-identified reservoir for credit in an authorized Demand Management Program
5. Determine the feasibility and risks of storing saved water over a multi-year period



DMPP 2025 Outcomes

- Four pilot projects were selected and implemented in irrigation season 2025. Pilot project details are summarized in the table below. If water right change applications are approved by March 1, 2026, by the Utah Division of Water Rights, the four pilot projects will continue for irrigation season 2026.
- Depletion reduction estimations are based on the methods summarized in an Estimated Depletion Reduction Calculation Methodology Technical Memorandum. Methods are for pilot projects selected in 2025 only and may change for future program cycles.
- Temporary Fallowing pilot projects were compensated at \$390 per acre-foot of estimated depletion reduction, Storage Forbearance pilot projects were compensated at \$150 per acre-foot of estimated depletion reduction.

2025 Utah Demand Management Pilot Program Pilots Projects

SE and E indicate Utah Division of Water Rights Southeast and East regions.

Estimated Maximum, 2025 & 2026

Project	Depletion Reduction Estimation (acre-feet)	Compensation Estimation
Fallowing – SE Tributary 1	4,944	\$1,928,160
Fallowing – E Green River	4,154	\$1,620,060
Storage – SE Tributary 1	3,377	\$506,624
Storage – E Tributary 1	9,000	–
Total Final	21,475	\$4,054,844



Colorado River Authority of Utah

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