

RESOLUTION NO. R2026-010

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA, REGARDING THE POST-2026 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM AND THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

WHEREAS, The United States Department of the Interior, acting through the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (“Reclamation”), serves as the water master for the Colorado River Basin and is responsible for the management and allocation of the Basin’s water resources; and,

WHEREAS, Reclamation’s role includes adopting operational guidelines through federal law to provide certainty and stability for Colorado River users and to ensure the efficient, equitable, and sustainable management of the river system; and,

WHEREAS, the current operational framework, known as the **2007 Interim Guidelines**, was developed in response to prolonged drought conditions and governs the coordination of releases from Lake Powell and Lake Mead, as well as the allocation of shortages among the seven Colorado River Basin States—Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico in the Upper Basin, and California, Nevada, and Arizona in the Lower Basin; and,

WHEREAS, the 2007 Interim Guidelines, together with the 2019 Drought Contingency Plans and related international agreements, are scheduled to expire on **December 31, 2026**; and,

WHEREAS, Reclamation is developing **Post-2026 Operational Guidelines** to govern the Colorado River system beginning in Water Year 2027, in response to persistent hydrologic changes, long-term drought, critically low reservoir levels, and increased risks to water supply reliability and hydropower generation; and,

WHEREAS, Reclamation, in coordination with the seven Basin States, Tribal Nations, the Republic of Mexico, and other stakeholders, is conducting a **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** process and has released a **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** evaluating alternative operational strategies for the post-2026 period; and,

WHEREAS, the Draft EIS evaluates five broad alternatives for post-2026 operations of the Colorado River system, including:

1. **No Action Alternative**, continuing the 2007 Interim Guidelines beyond their expiration; or,
2. **Basic Coordination Alternative**, increasing federal coordination without significant new requirements; or,
3. **Enhanced Coordination Alternative**, providing stronger linkages between reservoir elevations and operational decisions; or,
4. **Maximum Operational Flexibility Alternative**, emphasizing adaptive and responsive use of system storage; or,
5. **Supply-Driven Alternative**, tying operations directly to actual runoff and storage volumes; and,

WHEREAS, Reclamation has not identified a preferred alternative and has stated that it expects the seven Basin States to negotiate a consensus solution; and,

WHEREAS, despite ongoing discussions, meaningful progress toward a Basin-wide consensus has not been achieved, federal administrative deadlines under successive administrations have passed, and the proposals advanced by the Upper Basin and Lower Basin States remain significantly divergent; and,

WHEREAS, the Lower Basin States—California, Arizona, and Nevada—have proposed reductions to Lower Basin diversions of an additional 1.5 million acre-feet, with further reductions shared equally between the Upper and Lower Basin States, while the Upper Basin States have rejected this approach and proposed that reductions occur exclusively within the Lower Basin States and the Republic of Mexico; and,

WHEREAS, the Post-2026 Guidelines will shape Colorado River management for decades and will directly affect water availability, interstate cooperation, environmental outcomes, and the long-term resilience of the river system; and,

WHEREAS, the Yuma region holds long-standing Colorado River water rights and maintains direct contractual relationships with Reclamation, including the City of Yuma’s Priority One and Priority Three Colorado River water contracts, which constitute the City’s sole municipal water supply; and,

WHEREAS, the final federal deadline for Basin stakeholders to reach an agreement is **February 14, 2026**, and it is unlikely that consensus will be achieved by that date; and,

WHEREAS, absent agreement, Reclamation is expected to select a preferred alternative and consider public and stakeholder comments submitted on the Draft EIS, with the deadline for such comments being **March 2, 2026**;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Yuma as follows:

1. The City Council of the City of Yuma affirms the critical importance of protecting the City of Yuma’s existing Colorado River water rights and contractual entitlements in any Post-2026 operational framework.
2. The City Council directs staff to actively engage in the federal NEPA process and submit formal comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement prior to the March 2, 2026 deadline, consistent with the City’s water rights, contractual protections, and long-term water supply reliability.
3. The City Council urges Reclamation to adopt Post-2026 Operational Guidelines that are equitable, legally sound, and grounded in hydrologic reality, while recognizing existing priorities, contracts, and long-standing reliance interests within the Lower Basin, including those of the Yuma region.
4. The City Council encourages continued negotiations among the Basin States but recognizes that, in the absence of consensus, federal action must provide operational certainty and avoid disproportionate impacts to priority water users.

5. That a copy of this Resolution and the City Council’s official comments on the Federal Register be transmitted to Reclamation, the Arizona Department of Water Resources, relevant federal and state officials, and other appropriate stakeholders.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 2026.

APPROVED:

Douglas J. Nicholls
Mayor

ATTESTED:

Lynda L. Bushong
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Richard W. Files
City Attorney