



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

For immediate release
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UNITED STATES AND MEXICO CONCLUDE COLORADO RIVER AGREEMENT

Officials with the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, today announced the conclusion of a new Colorado River agreement, Minute 323, "Extension of Cooperative Measures and Adoption of a Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan in the Colorado River Basin." Commission officials signed the Minute on September 21 in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua and both governments approved it on September 27. The Minute's entry into force was announced during a ceremony held at the Water Education Foundation's Colorado River Symposium in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Minute follows more than two years of negotiations among federal and state authorities from both countries, taking into consideration recommendations from the works groups, which included water users, scientists, academics, and nongovernmental organizations.

The agreement, which will remain in effect through 2026, extends or replaces key elements of Minute 319, a previous agreement that expires at the end of 2017. Minute 323 contains the following provisions:

- Allows Mexico to defer delivery of a portion of its Colorado River allotment in the event of potential emergencies, such as earthquakes, or as a result of water conservation projects in Mexico. This water, known as Mexico's Water Reserve, will be available for subsequent delivery to Mexico as determined through its planning processes. This gives Mexico greater flexibility in how it manages its Colorado River allotment while also boosting Lake Mead elevation to the benefit of all users.

- Provides additional quantities of Colorado River water to Mexico during certain high elevation reservoir conditions at Lake Mead when additional water is available to users in the United States, providing benefits to both countries.
- Establishes proactive basin operations during certain low elevation reservoir conditions at Lake Mead by applying water delivery reductions in order to deter more severe reductions in the future, giving certainty in both countries' operations when these conditions occur.
- Establishes a Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan so that, should a Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan be put into effect in the United States, then Mexico will also undertake water savings in parity with U.S. savings. These savings will be recoverable when reservoir conditions improve.
- Implements measures to address salinity impacts stemming from the joint cooperative actions, in conformance with the provisions of Minute 242, entitled, "Permanent and Definitive Solution to the International Problem of the Salinity of the Colorado River," dated August 30, 1973.
- Identifies measures to address daily flow variability in Colorado River water deliveries to Mexico.
- Through a cooperative effort among the Governments of the United State and Mexico and nongovernmental organizations, provides water for the environment and funding for environmental monitoring and habitat restoration.
- Provides greater U.S. investment in water infrastructure and environmental projects in Mexico than Minute 319 in order to modernize and improve Irrigation District 014 in the Mexicali Valley in areas that wish to participate. This will generate additional volumes of water that will be shared between both countries and the environment, in accordance with the Minute's provisions.
- Notes the ongoing efforts of the binational All-American Canal Turnout Project Work Group to examine resources associated with a potential binational connection between the All-American Canal in the United States and Mexico's Colorado River Tijuana Aqueduct Pump Station PB 0.

"Minute 323 is the result of many rounds of technical discussions involving a broad group of stakeholders from both countries. This agreement puts us on a path of cooperation rather than conflict as

we work with Mexico to address the Colorado River Basin's many challenges," said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina of the International Boundary and Water Commission.

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon said, "This agreement provides certainty for water operations in both countries and mainly establishes a planning tool that allows Mexico to define the most suitable actions for managing its Colorado River waters allotted by the 1944 Water Treaty."

Joining the Commissioners at the ceremony were David Bernhardt, United States Deputy Secretary of the Interior; Thomas Buschatzke, Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources; Hillary Quam, Border Affairs Coordinator, U.S. Department of State Office of Mexican Affairs; and, from Mexico, Director General for North America Mauricio Ibarra of the Ministry of Foreign Relations.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries. Under the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico is allotted 1.5 million acre-feet (1850 million cubic meters) per year of water from the Colorado River.

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