

U.S. Department of the Interior



NEWS

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary
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Secretary Kempthorne Announces Joint U.S.-Mexico Statement on Lower Colorado River Issues

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced today that the Government of Mexico and the Government of the United States have renewed their commitment to cooperate and collaborate on issues related to the Colorado River. The announcement follows a recent meeting between Secretary Kempthorne and Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan of Mexico.

"The issues facing the Colorado River basin are complex, and increasing our dialogue with Mexico will make the path to resolving them much easier," Kempthorne said. "The United States is pleased to collaborate with Mexico as both nations face some formidable challenges in the future and move toward a new era of cooperation on the Colorado River."

The U.S.-Mexico Joint Statement is attached.

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U.S. and Mexico Agree to Discuss Joint Cooperative Actions Related to the Colorado River

As a result of high-level bilateral consultations, U.S. and Mexican federal authorities have agreed to discuss a number of issues of mutual concern to both nations related to the Colorado River.

The Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Reclamation, is responsible for the domestic management of the Colorado River, the waters of which are shared by seven U.S. basin states and Mexico. Mexico's Colorado River allocation is governed by the 1944 Treaty Relating to the Utilization of the Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande, which is administered by the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC).

The U.S. and Mexican authorities have agreed that cooperative, innovative and holistic measures should be considered to ensure that the Colorado River is able to continue to meet environmental, agricultural and urban demands of both nations.

The Mexican authorities stressed the importance of ensuring that the needs of all stakeholders in the lower portion of the Colorado River are understood and considered by leaders of both nations.

The U.S. authorities acknowledged the growing national and international focus on the Colorado River as a result of the ongoing historic drought in the basin. The U.S. authorities also noted recent innovative agreements among the seven U.S. states that rely on the Colorado River.

The authorities from both nations expressed their interest in order to reinforce bilateral cooperation regarding issues related to the lower portion of the Colorado River; acknowledged areas of concern regarding water conservation actions, while highlighting emerging innovative and comprehensive concepts that could be used to benefit water users in both the U.S. and Mexico.

In that regard, authorities from both nations agreed that the IBWC, a treaty-based bilateral organization with over a century of successful collaboration, should be utilized to expedite discussions in coming weeks to further Colorado River cooperation. Among the issues expected to be addressed are:

- continued needs of both nations for water for urban, agricultural and environmental purposes, the study of the hydrological system and potential impacts of climate change, including the effects of the ongoing historic Colorado River drought;
- environmental priorities, including Colorado River Delta habitat protection and enhancement;
- opportunities for water conservation, storage and supply augmentation, such as seawater desalination and reuse; strategies aimed to ease variations in the Colorado River system;
- potential opportunities for more efficient Colorado River water deliveries to Mexico.