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**NEWS
RELEASE**



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Arizona seeks Interior's help in resolving Colorado River pact

Negotiations on the operation of the Colorado River have hit an impasse, and Arizona has asked Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to mediate the disagreements.

In letters sent to Kempthorne and representatives of the Seven Basin States today, Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Herb Guenther also asked Interior to extend the deliberations for an additional two months. The Secretary is scheduled to release a Final Environmental Impact Statement on August 30, with a final Record of Decision to be issued at the end of December.

"We believed we had a workable agreement when we sent the set of proposed guidelines to the Secretary on April 30 that was signed by all seven Colorado River Basin States," Guenther said.

In the interim, however, Upper Basin representatives insisted on changes that affect the amount of water released annually from Lake Powell into Lake Mead. Under the Law of the River, each basin is allocated up to 7.5 million acre-feet (maf) of water each year. An additional 1.5 maf is allocated under treaty to Mexico. The Upper and Lower Basin states share equally in meeting the Mexican treaty allocation.

Arizona is willing to accommodate its neighbors so long as nothing harms Arizona, Guenther emphasized. But he said representatives of the Upper Basin insisted on changes to the proposed guidelines that could put Arizona's full 2.8 maf allocation at risk during years when the river is low.

"Arizona rejects the attempt to rewrite the agreement," Guenther said. The proposed change would "change the risk to Arizona in an unacceptable manner," he added.

Also at risk are proposals by Nevada and California to augment the river and use the water they contribute without sharing with Arizona. The Legislature gave ADWR the authority to "forbear" any sharing requirement.

The April guidelines permit any party to invoke consultation with the Secretary of the Interior. "We don't know what the Secretary will decide to do," Guenther added. "It is too bad that the guidelines we agreed to in April suddenly were unsatisfactory to the Upper Basin."

Arizona believes the help of the Secretary in mediating the disagreement is vital, he said. "A failure to resolve this dispute will seriously jeopardize any cooperative approach to management of the Colorado River," Guenther said.