



**Central Advisory Council Minutes**  
**Wednesday, Mar 27, 2024**  
**10:30-11:30**  
**Virtual**

**1. Welcome- William Merkley**

Mr. Merkley, noting a quorum, called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the January 10, 2024, CAC Meeting - William Merkley**

With no edits to the January 10, 2024 minutes, a motion was made by Jack Lytle and seconded by Dex Winterton to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

**3. Presentation on Recent Big River Developments, Post 2026 Alternatives - Authority Executive Director, Amy Haas**

Ms. Haas began by explaining that Post-2026 negotiations are focused on when the current criteria for the 2007 interim guidelines expire. These guidelines influenced the Upper Basin Alternative which has 2 elements and then some additional objectives. Focus on sustainable operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead that rebuild storage, align with hydrologic conditions, and follow the flow of the river.

- reducing risks to water users caused by depleted storage and lakes.
- address the imbalance between water supply and demand in the lower basin
- Provide greater predictability and reliability for reservoir operations
- Operate LP and Mead based on observed conditions vs unreliable forecasts
- Acknowledge the upper basin's ability to develop our allocation if water is there

**LP-** Releases between 9 and 6 maf, unless when spilling. LP operations be governed by the content of the reservoir rather than the 24 month forecast. Don't have LP releases tied to lower basin uses. This alternative is designed to protect the reservoirs ability to release water consistent with our legal and our compact obligations.

**Lake Mead-** Under most conditions, LB will take reductions of 1.5 maf to account for evaporation and losses ie. structural deficit. Also additional reductions of up to 2.4 maf when the combined storage of LP and Mead is at or less than 20%. These reductions are based on the concept of the "2 reservoir approach."

**Parallel Activities-** 2 categories, 1- voluntary, temporary compensated conservation. This will allow us to be able to conserve water and get credit for it. 2- potential releases and recovery at CRSPA initial units. Any such parallel activities would be subject to new agreements outside the scope of the post-2026 process and used to protect LP's continued ability to make releases and protect UB interests.

Mr Merkley- What is the biggest issue that the lower basin has with the proposals?

Ms Haas- The banded releases of between 9 and 6 maf, they want us to go as hi as 11maf, they don't like the concept of decoupling from LP releases from LB. We've seen 5 years of 9maf releases while the LB mines Mead and those 9maf releases were made bc Mead elevations were dropping. There is press saying that the UB is not prepared to do anything and that the UB is putting all the onus on LB. we need to clarify that this isn't the case.

Jack Lytle- on the potential release and recovery of the CRSPA initial units as it relates to DROA what are the triggers that would make those calls and are the LB states still wanting to connect the reservoirs as one, does this avoid that?

Ms. Haas- This would all be subject to a separate negotiation, and some key points we would insist on is they can't release DROA water from Glen Canyon. The UB will not support that, and we will only countenance DROA releases if we can ensure that they're fully recovered upstream. Ms Haas stated that the LB wants to base their proposals on the contents of 7 reservoirs including our upstream units, and basically treat them as extensions of LP. The LB feels that this is contrary to law and to our best interest. Ben Musselman- Why don't they instead of basing a release on the contents on Oct 1st, base it on the contents as ongoing so that if you have a good winter those releases could go up likewise, and a bad one they go down?

Ms Haas- That is the situation under the current guidelines, there's a feature the April Adjustment, depending on the runoff forecast the UB could be in a position of releasing more to the LB. This has created problems because it doesn't you down when we're truing up. Forecasts are inherently inaccurate especially if they're 6 months out. We want a sustainable reservoir upstream and we shy away from balancing releases bc it has hurt us under the current situation. Balancing releases is in the LB proposal. Mark Stilson- How did the proposal releases play into the 75 over 10 obligation under the compact?

Ms. Haas- Compact Compliance is our big issue. We have based this alternative from a hydrology based standpoint. This brings up the issue of what our obligations is under the 22 compact, we shall not cause to be depleted flows at Lees Ferry below that 75 over 10 threshold. Given the hydrology we don't believe there would be any causation there and part of any 7-state proposal would be an absolute acknowledgement that we are satisfying our compact obligations.

Mr Stilson- I agree with that and I think it's right on.

Ms Haas- One thing we're insisting on is that in the UB we experience shortage. Ms Haas referred to a chart by BoR that contrasts upper and lower division depletions, and that the UB is using roughly have of what the lower basin consumes in the way of depletions value.

**Lower Basin Alternative:** Part 1-Releases between 11maf and 6maf based on total upper system contents. Releases under this Hydrologic Shortage Based Release Regime would increase as upper basin uses increase. Part 2- Proposed reduction determination. LB willing to accept a 1.5 maf reduction for the structural deficit, but also proposing additional reductions of up to 1.4maf when all 7 reservoirs total below 38% --combined volume, and these additional reductions are to be evenly split between upper and lower basins. Under LB alternative, Mexico is expected to contribute 250,000 aft of their total 1.5 maf allotment. They have not agreed and this will need to be a binational discussion.

Mr Merkley- Do we know what reclamation is working on?

Ms Haas- Reclamation might emulating what they did last year, like coming up with alternatives that neither basin can live with.

Mr Merkley- what happens if Reclamation implements their guidelines and we go into litigation, how do we operate the river in this situation?

Ms Haas- Rec has not been forthcoming on what a no-action alternative will look like. One thing we could optimize is meaningful conservation. We're conserving water only to send it downstream. If we could figure out a way to reduce consumptive use and compensate folks in a meaningful way, where we get credit for that against our compact obligations.

#### **4. Briefing on CRAU FY 2025 Work Plan, Betsy Morgan and Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineers-**

Betsy Morgan- Asked for the council to review the FY24 Work Plan in preparation for the upcoming meeting. Ms. Morgan would like for the council to provide feedback on their thoughts regarding the implementation of projects and if possible, highlight some of the efforts that are more underdeveloped.

**5. Housekeeping/Administrative Items- Cody Stewart** notified council that CRAU has created an Ag Advisory Council. Mr Stewart referred to the goals identified by the council regarding more input from tribes. He stated that Dustin Jansen is willing to participate in meetings, but if the council would prefer to look for a tribal member from the central region that would be an option.

Mr Merkley- has invited a Ute tribal member to join the council and is waiting to hear back.

**Adjourn-** The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM

**Next meeting:** Thursday, Apr 25, 2024 10:30 AM in Price, UT

## **CAC 2024 OBJECTIVES**

- Continue to discuss key challenges and solutions for the Colorado River
- Coordinate and share ideas with our sister councils
- Identify and support water conservation project proposals for the Board's consideration
- Better understanding and integrating tribal concerns
- Encourage a better understanding of what curtailment scenarios might look like in Utah among stakeholders and citizens in our region

# **ADVISORY COUNCIL GOVERNING RULE**

On December 2, 2021, the Authority Board adopted the following advisory council rule to help guide council operations:

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL GOVERNING RULE**

*This rule is established under the authority of the Colorado River Authority of Utah Act, Section 63M-14-209, to provide the general standards and procedures for the operation of the Colorado River Authority of Utah (“Authority”) Advisory Councils.*

### **Advisory Council Membership**

- (1) There is created one or more Advisory Councils that shall consist of members representing a variety of Colorado River interests in the state of Utah.*
- (2) Advisory Councils will serve as a forum for civic engagement on the use, development, conservation, and protection of Utah’s Colorado River entitlement.*
- (3) Advisory Council Members may serve by appointment or by application.
  - (a) Each Advisory Council shall be governed by co-chairs, one selected by its membership and one selected by the Authority Board. The co-chairs will conduct meetings and present council recommendations to the Authority Board.*
  - (b) Authority staff shall provide administrative support to all Advisory Councils.**

### **Advisory Council Meetings**

- (1) Advisory Councils shall meet on dates and times as jointly determined by the co-chairs.*
- (2) Each Advisory Council shall:
  - (a) hear broad input, including recommendations, data and information regarding all matters affecting Utah’s Colorado River system water; and*
  - (b) make recommendations to the Authority Board in an advisory capacity.**