REGION 9
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

March 3, 2026

Genevieve Johnson
Acting Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 61470
Boulder City, Nevada 89006

Subject: EPA's comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead, Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins (EIS No. 20250184)

Dear Genevieve Johnson:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. The CAA Section 309 role requires the EPA to review and comment on the environmental impact of any proposed federal action subject to NEPA's environmental impact statement requirements and to make its comments public.

The Secretary of the Department of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, proposes to adopt new guidelines and coordinated management strategies to address water operations in Lake Powell and Lake Mead to take effect when the current agreements expire in 2026. This Draft EIS has been prepared to inform the Secretary's timely adoption of a new set of guidelines that would be sufficiently robust and provide improved predictability to all water users and managers in the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins. The seven basin states – Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, California, Arizona, and Nevada – are currently working to develop an agreement for Colorado River water distribution. Reclamation's analysis describes alternatives that would address critically low storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead and significant hydrologic variability.

The EPA provided scoping comments for this EIS on September 1, 2022. We appreciate how Reclamation addressed our recommendations to discuss ongoing coordination with Tribal governments, to describe impacts to water and air quality, and to develop operational scenarios that account for future drought conditions. We have no further comments for the Draft EIS.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this document. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 947-4167, or contact Stephanie Gordon, the lead reviewer for this project, at (415) 972-3098 or gordon.stephanies@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

JEAN PRIJATEL

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Jean Prijatel
Branch Manager
Office of the Regional Administrator