Looking Upstream: An Upper Basin Perspective

Jim Lochhead – CEO/Manager
March 29, 2022
Denver Water facts

- Established in 1918.
- Serving 1.5 million people (25% of state's population).
- Use less than 2% of water used in the state.
- Water supply comes from snowmelt in Rocky Mountains feeding the South Platte and Colorado Rivers.
- 4,000 square miles of watershed area.
- More than 3,000 miles of pipe.
- About 1,100 employees working statewide.
- 20 dams, 12 reservoirs, 4 treatment plants and 18 pump stations.

Cheesman Reservoir
Denver Water Collection System

- Spans multiple watersheds on both sides of the Continental Divide.
- System is imbalanced – 80% collected on the south end.
- Amount of water from each watershed can vary from year to year.
- Fifty percent of water supply comes from the South Platte.
- Fifty percent comes from the Colorado River.
Background

• Colorado River is 1450 miles long, through 7 states and Mexico.
• Supplies water to 40 million people and 5.5 million acres of agriculture.
• System relies on two regulating reservoirs: Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the two largest reservoirs in the US.
Comparison of Basin-Wide Depletions
Historic Depletions vs Est 2022 (MAF)
(BOR CU&L, March 2022 24 Mo Study est)

Historic Depletions
- Mainstem Lower Basin + Mexico Depletions: 10.46
- Upper Division Depletions: 4.39

Est 2022
- Mainstem Lower Basin + Mexico Depletions: 9.86
- Upper Division Depletions: 4.39
2007 Guidelines – Balancing Lakes Powell and Mead

– A shortage strategy tied to Lake Mead elevations
  • 333, 417, 500 kaf at elevations 1075, 1050, and 1025 feet
  • Initiate efforts to develop additional guidelines for shortages if Lake Mead falls below elevation 1,025 (Includes reconsultation with Basin States)

– Release from Lake Powell determined by storage of Powell and Mead
  • Under high reservoir conditions, minimum objective release of 8.23 maf from Lake Powell unless storage equalization releases are required
  • Under lower reservoir conditions, either reduce Lake Powell release or balance volumes depending upon elevations at Lakes Powell and Mead
Questions?