



colorado river shortage

FACT SHEET

ARIZONA – STRONGER TOGETHER

We anticipate the first-ever “Tier 1” shortage declaration on the Colorado River beginning in 2022. The shortage will result in a substantial cut to Arizona’s share of the river, with reductions falling largely to central Arizona agricultural users. Water supplies for cities will not be affected and tribal supplies remain secure.

These reductions are painful, but we are prepared. We have long understood the risks to Arizona’s Colorado River supplies and have been planning for decades, including the successful efforts to help craft the Drought Contingency Plan for the Colorado River system in 2019.

As we face the prospect of a hotter and drier future, we are confident that with our long history of successful collaboration among our diverse stakeholders – agriculture, tribes, cities, environment and industry – we will continue to find innovative and effective solutions to sustain Arizona’s Colorado River supply.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Arizona is prepared for a Colorado River shortage.
- Water interests from throughout the state worked collectively to share the risks and benefits of the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP).
- Together, these efforts reduce the pain of the near-term reductions while addressing risks of future shortages.
- We are taking steps and participating in partnerships to make the river more sustainable during drought and the reality of a hotter and drier future.

While we may have less water coming to Arizona from the Colorado River in 2022, Arizona’s water managers and suppliers have been taking measures to prepare and will continue to work to ensure the river remains stable for generations to come.

WHAT IS A COLORADO RIVER SHORTAGE?

A shortage means a reduction in the Colorado River supply available to Arizona.

In 2020 and 2021, the river has been operating in a “Tier Zero” status, requiring the State to forego 192,000 acre-feet of Arizona’s 2.8-million acre-foot annual entitlement to Lake Mead. This reduction is coming entirely from the Central Arizona Project (CAP) system.

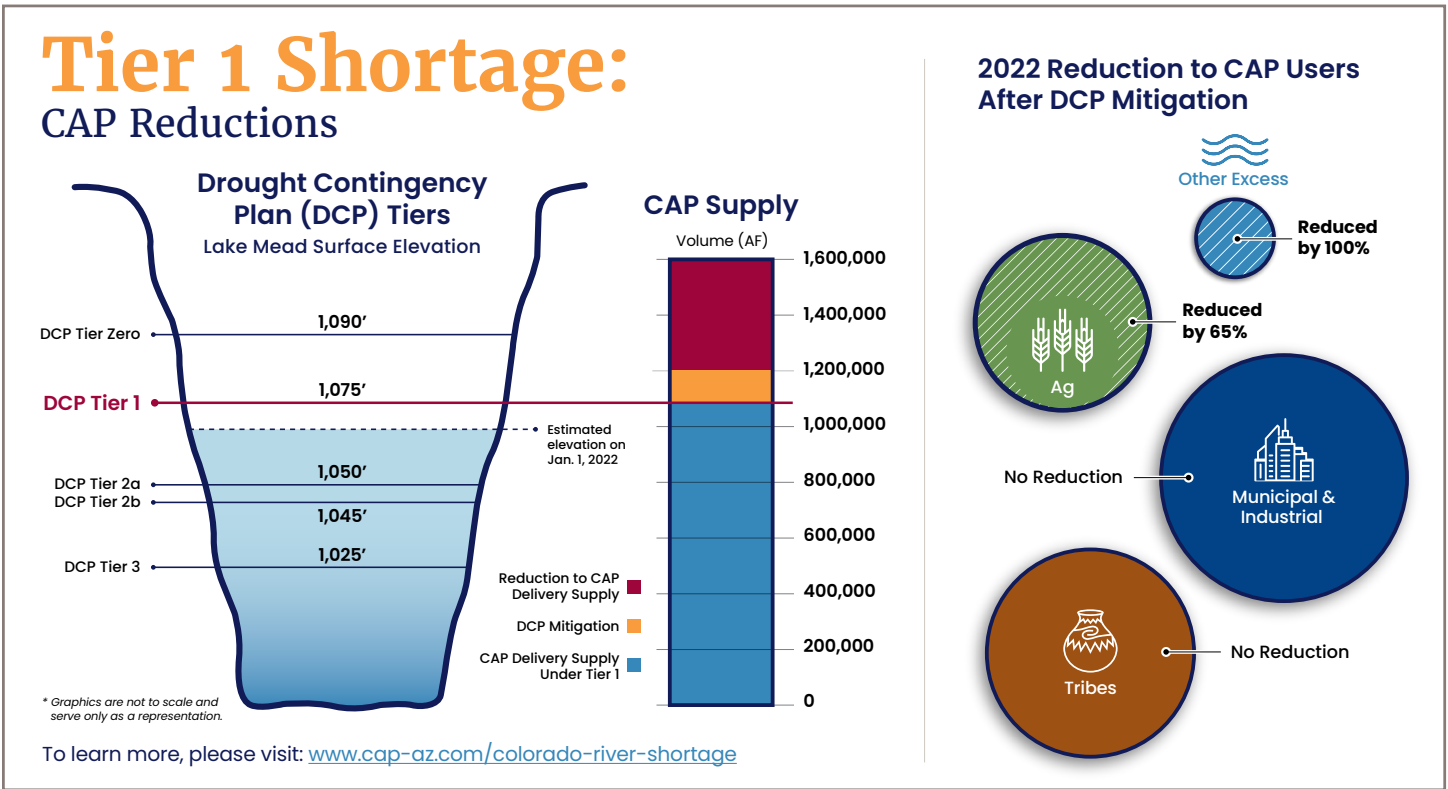
Based on the current hydrology, it is likely that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will announce a “Tier 1” shortage level for 2022. This will require Arizona to further reduce uses to a total of 512,000 acre-feet, again borne almost entirely by the CAP system.

The “Tier 1” reductions would constitute about 30% of CAP’s normal supply; about 18% of Arizona’s Colorado River supply; and less than 8% of Arizona’s total water use.

WHO WILL BE IMPACTED BY A LOWER BASIN COLORADO RIVER SHORTAGE?

The shortage will result in a substantial cut to Arizona’s share of the river, with reductions falling largely to central Arizona agricultural users. Water supplies for cities will not be affected and tribal supplies remain secure.

The following infographic shows CAP reductions for 2022 in a Tier 1 Shortage:

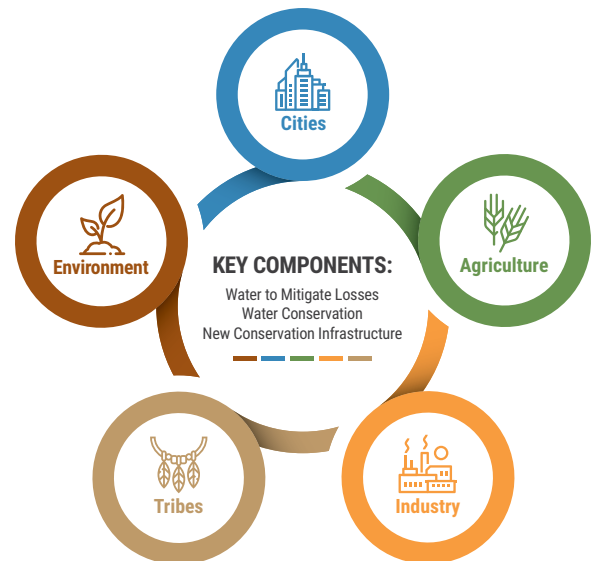


HOW HAS THE DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN PREPARED ARIZONA FOR SHORTAGE?

Prior to DCP, Arizona water users voluntarily conserved a portion of the State’s allocation in Lake Mead. The DCP formalized that practice, requiring that Arizona leave specified volumes of water in the reservoir as surface levels dipped below designated tiers.

Arizona’s DCP Steering Committee included about 40 representatives of tribes, cities, agriculture, developers, environmental organizations and elected officials. This Committee worked collectively to share the risks and benefits of the DCP.

Arizona’s DCP implementation plan represents the best of Arizona water management: collaboration, cooperation, and innovation. The plan shares resources and mitigates the impacts of shortage reductions. In the plan, some are committing to leaving extra water in Lake Mead to reduce future risks, while others are sharing water with the most severely impacted of the state’s water users. Together these efforts reduce the pain of the near-term reductions while addressing risks of future shortages.





HOW ARE WE FOCUSING ON THE HEALTH OF THE COLORADO RIVER FOR THE FUTURE?

The successful process that was used for DCP is being replicated by the Arizona Reconsultation Committee, which is again being led by the Arizona Department of Water Resources and CAP. That process will prepare Arizona for new Colorado River operating rules to be developed in the coming years, after 2026.

ADWR and CAP also participated in the Colorado River Climate and Hydrology Work Group that published its report titled the “Colorado River Basin Climate and Hydrology: State of the Science.” The report integrated nearly 800 peer-reviewed studies, agency reports and other sources to assess the state of the science and the technical methods relevant to water resources in the Colorado River Basin. ADWR Director Buschatzke identified the report as one that “...serves as a foundational knowledge base for water resources managers and researchers to help navigate the future of the Colorado River.”

In addition, ADWR and CAP are taking steps and participating in partnerships to make the river more sustainable during drought and the reality of a hotter/drier future. For CAP, this includes its Climate Adaptation Plan, participation in the Water Utility Climate Alliance and a partnership with ASU and NASA to study to effects of climate change in the Colorado River Basin with research that will be relevant to the ARC process.



new.azwater.gov



www.CentralArizonaProject.com
www.KnowYourWaterNews.com

April, 2021