

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## Colorado River Basin: Current Conditions and Operational Update

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**March 11, 2015**

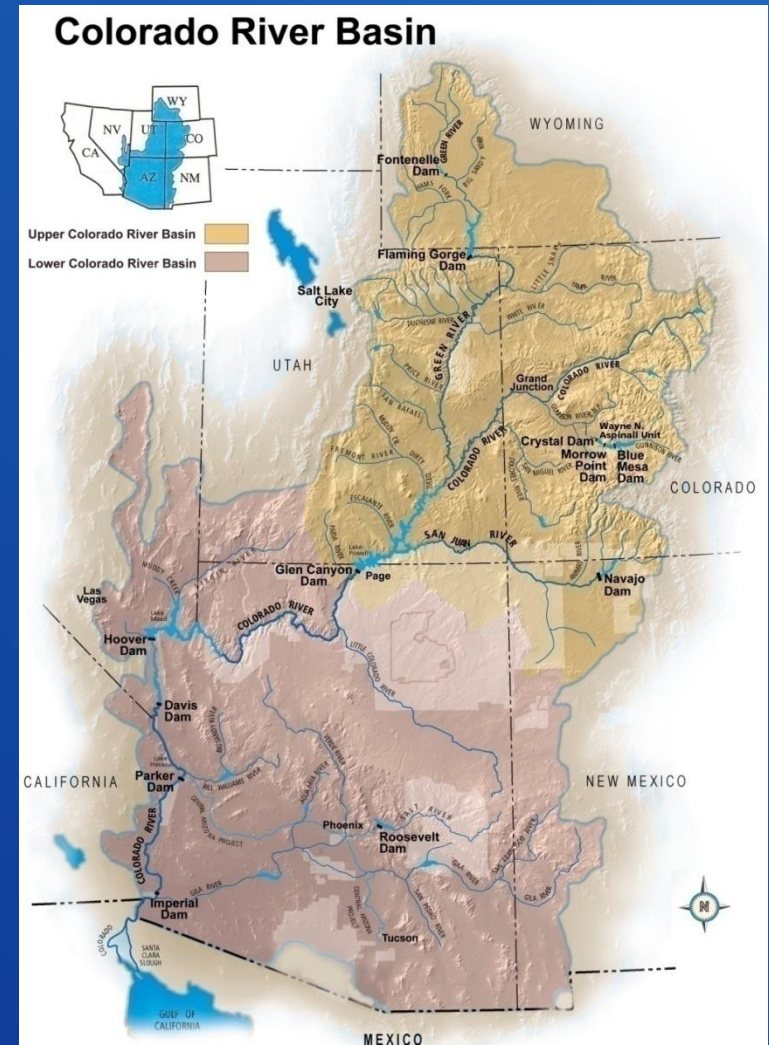


U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation

# Overview of the Colorado River System

## Basin Hydrology

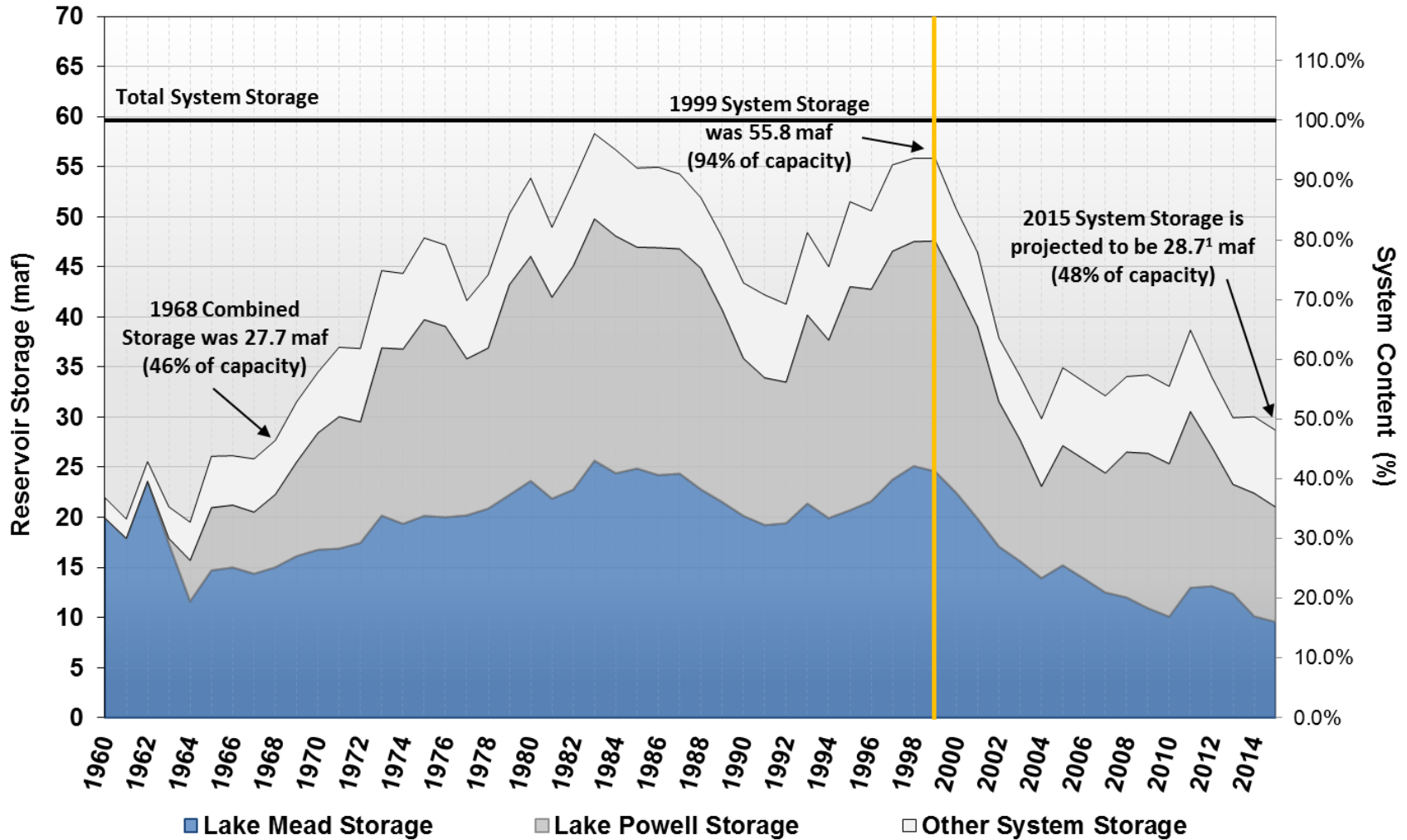
- 16.5 million acre-feet (maf) allocated annually
- 13 to 14.5 maf of consumptive use annually
- 60 maf of storage
- 14.8 maf average annual “natural” inflow into Lake Powell over past 100 years
- 1.3 maf average annual inflow in the Lower Basin
- Inflows are highly variable year-to-year



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# System Storage - End of Water Year Total Volumes

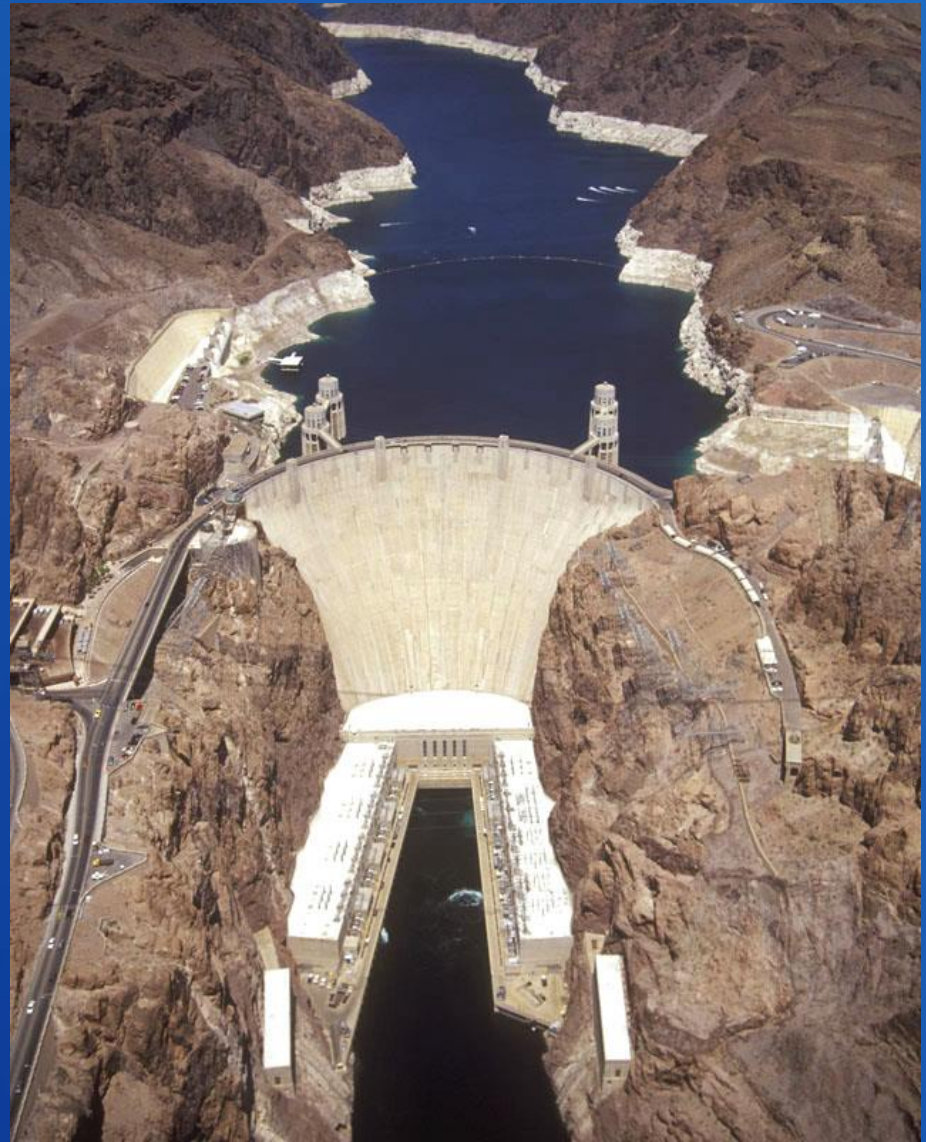
Water Years 1960 - 2015<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> End of Water Year 2015 storage is based on projections from the February 2015 Most Probable 24-Month Study.



Lake Mead near Hoover Dam ~2000



Lake Mead near Hoover Dam ~2010

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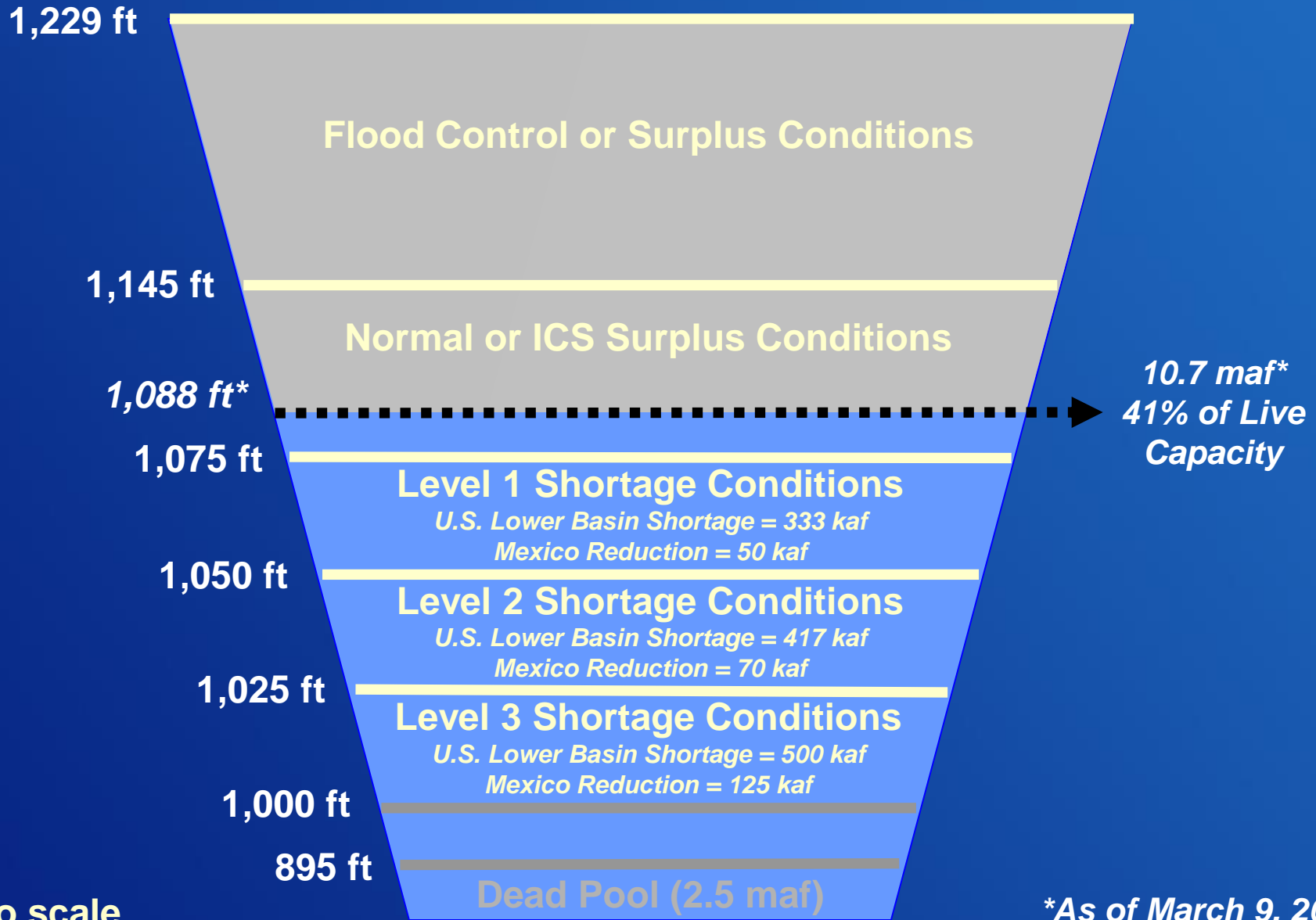
# Overview of the 2007 Interim Guidelines

- Implemented in 2007 for an interim period (through 2026)
- Operations specified for full range of operation for Lake Powell and Lake Mead
- Strategy for shortages in the Lower Basin
- “Intentionally Created Surplus” mechanism in the Lower Basin to encourage efficient and flexible use and management of Colorado River water
- For more information:  
<http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/strategies.html>



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# Lake Mead – Key Elevations<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Lower Basin shortage volumes based on the 2007 Interim Guidelines; Mexico shortage volumes based on IBWC Minute 319.

# Colorado River Basin Storage (as of March 10, 2015)

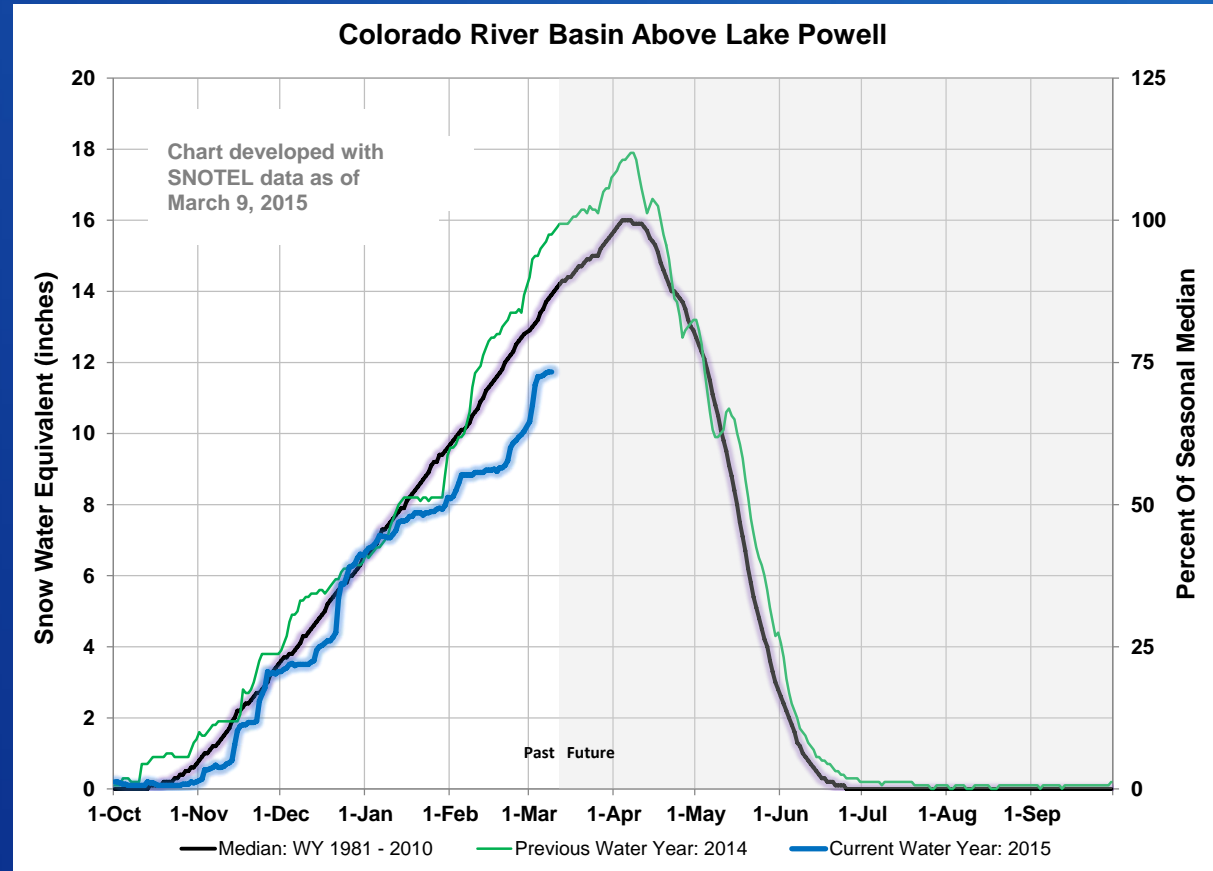
| Current Storage       | Percent Full | MAF  | Elevation (Feet) |
|-----------------------|--------------|------|------------------|
| Lake Powell           | 45%          | 11.0 | 3,592            |
| Lake Mead             | 41%          | 10.7 | 1,088            |
| Total System Storage* | 49%          | 29.2 | NA               |

\*Total system storage was 28.7 maf or 48% this time last year

# Upper Colorado River Basin 2015 Snowpack and Forecasted Inflow

**Current Snowpack**  
87% of median

**2015 April-July  
Forecasted Inflow  
into Lake Powell**  
5.1 maf  
(71% of average)

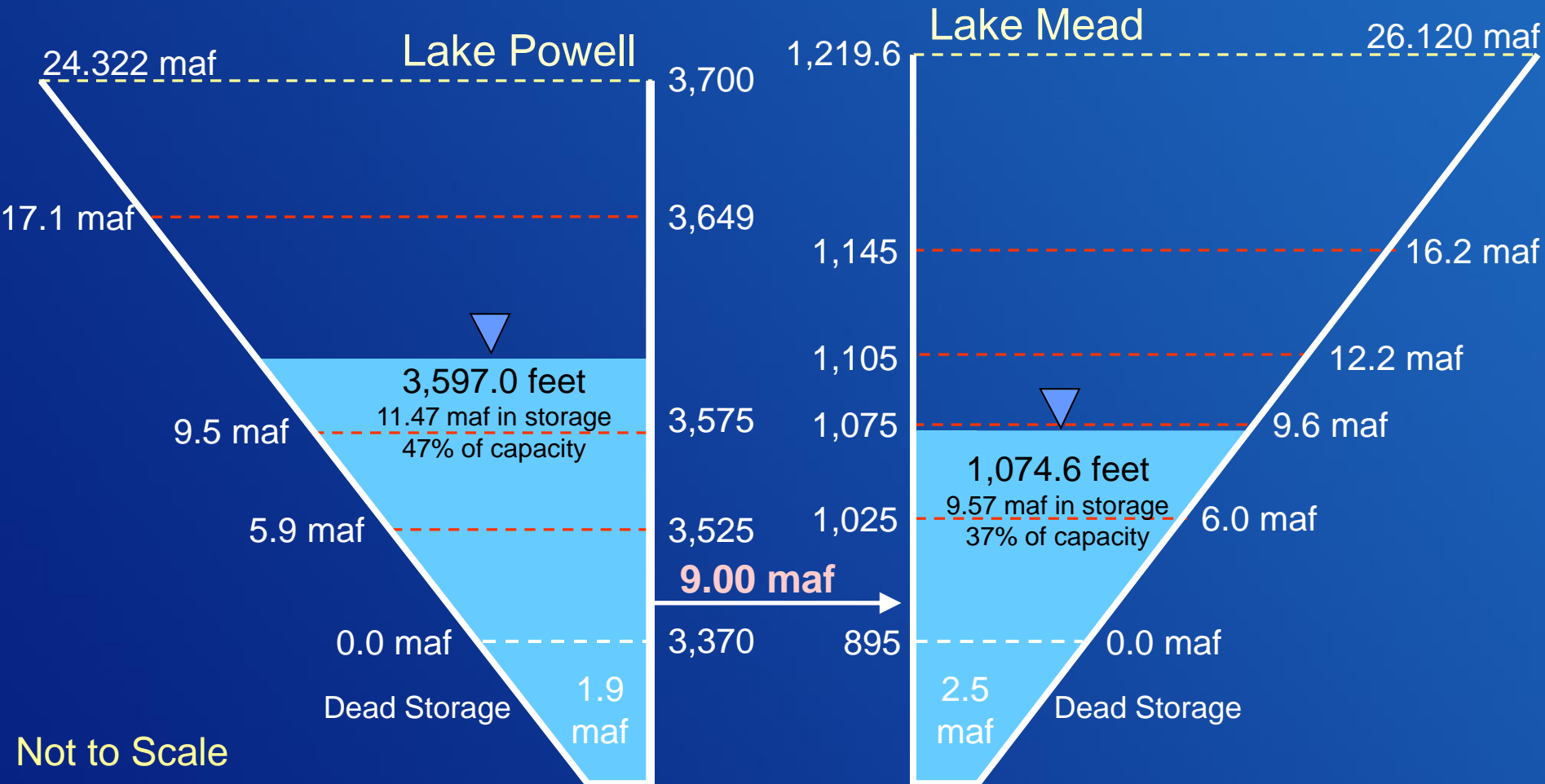




# End of Water Year 2015 Projections

February 2015 24-Month Study Most Probable Inflow Scenario<sup>1</sup>

Projected Unregulated Inflow into Powell<sup>1</sup> = 8.71 maf (80% of average)

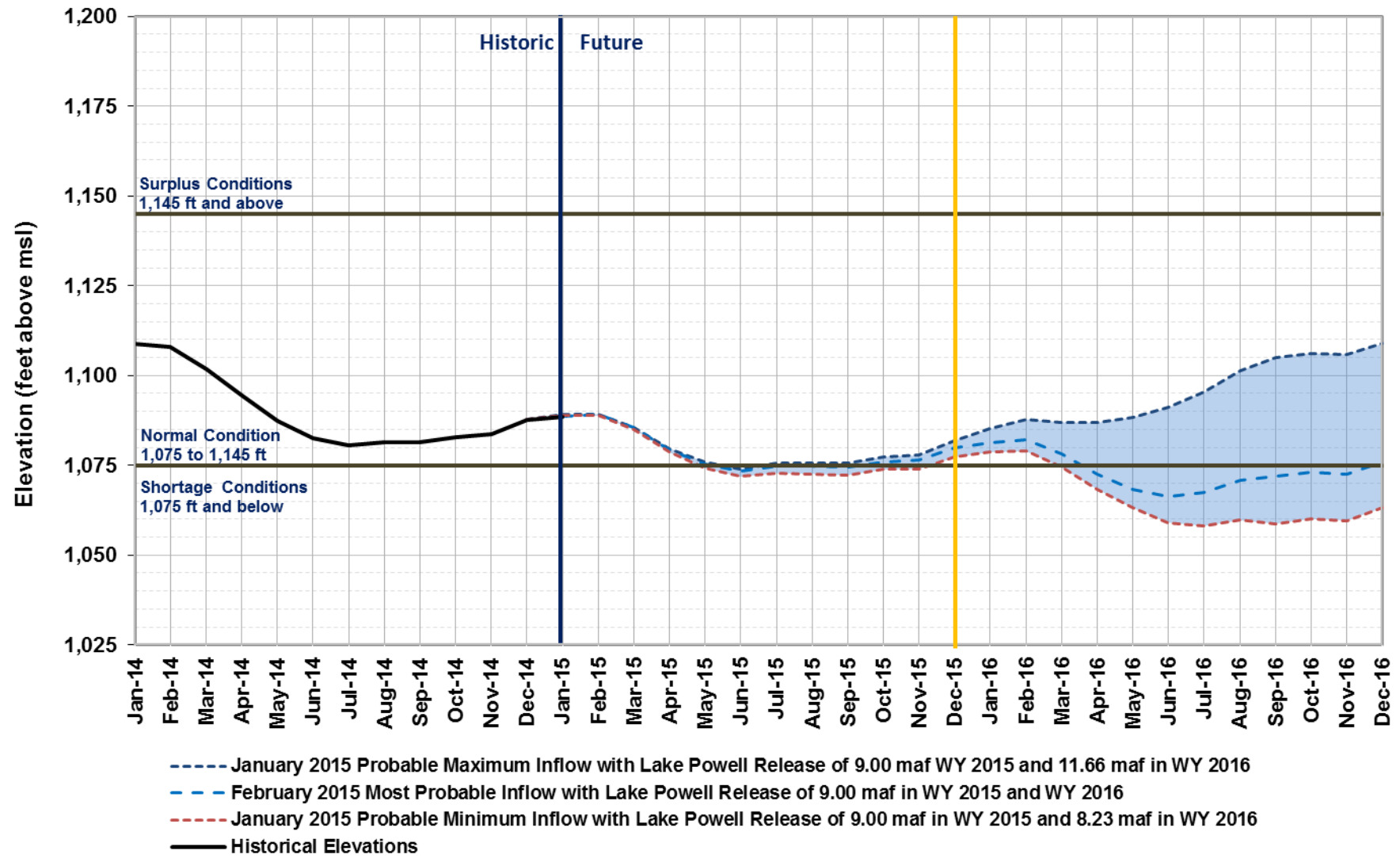


Not to Scale

<sup>1</sup> WY 2015 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell is based on the CBRFC outlook dated 2/3/15.

# Lake Mead End of Month Elevations

Projections from January and February 2015 24-Month Study Inflow Scenarios



An aerial photograph of a large concrete dam with a reservoir behind it, set in a rugged, mountainous landscape. The water in the reservoir is a deep blue-green color. The dam has several spillways and a road on top. The surrounding terrain is rocky and sparsely vegetated.

# The Colorado River: Current Conditions and Operational Update

For more information:  
<http://www.usbr.gov/lc/riverops.html>  
[BCOOwaterops@usbr.gov](mailto:BCOOwaterops@usbr.gov)

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