Bureau of Reclamation

News Release
Upper Colorado Region

Salt Lake City, Utah
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Glen Canyon Dam Release 92,000 cfs

Flows out of Glen Canyon Dam have been increased to 92,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), Bureau of Reclamation Regional Director Clifford Barrett announced today.

"A sudden rainstorm in the Rockies of Western Colorado caused runoff into Lake Powell to increase from 90,000 cfs last week to 120,000 cfs this week. Since Lake Powell is now 6½ feet above its full elevation of 3,700 feet above sea level, we had no choice but to increase releases out of Glen Canyon Dam," Barrett said. Raising the spillway gates allows storage in excess of the reservoir's normal capacity.

Flows out of Glen Canyon have been 70,000 cfs for the past several days. The new increase to 92,000 cfs nearly triples a normal peak release of 31,500 cfs. The additional releases will flow into Lake Mead to be stored. Current releases from Lake Mead of 40,000 cfs will be increased to between 45,000 and 50,000 cfs on July 5.

The Bureau of Reclamation determines its release amounts on data developed by a consortium of Federal agencies called the Colorado River Forecast Center. Collectively, these agencies use snowpack information, weather forecasting, remote satellite sensing data, and flow patterns to predict flows coming into the Colorado River Basin, measured at Glen Canyon. This procedure of pooling information, which began in 1979, has substantially improved the accuracy of predictions over past years when several agencies did it separately. This year's extremely abnormal weather pattern, however, simply did not fit the forecast model. The heavy snowfall late in May, the cold spring followed by a sudden hot spell, caused a quick runoff of water into the Colorado River Basin.

In February, the volume predicted to flow into the Basin for the April through July period was 6.7 million acre-feet, which is about normal. However, about 14.6 million acre-feet, or 210 percent of normal, are expected to flow into the system. In order for Reclamation to have accommodated this highest-ever-recorded inflow by releasing sooner, it would have had to start in January, but at that time predictions were that this would be a normal water year.