

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****Bureau of Reclamation****Proposed Rule Making for Offstream Storage of Colorado River Water and Interstate Redemption of Storage Credits in the Lower Division States**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Reclamation, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of draft programmatic environmental assessment (DPEA).

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared a DPEA on proposed rule making for offstream storage of Colorado River water and interstate redemption or use of storage credits in the lower Division States. The proposed rule is intended to encourage further cooperation among the Lower Division States in resolving common water resource problems and demands. The proposed rule would establish a procedural framework under which authorized entities in the Lower Division States could store offstream certain Colorado River water, develop storage credits associated with that water, and use those credits within the Lower Division.

**ADDRESSES:** For copies of the DPEA, write to either (1) Mr. James Green, LC-

2506, Environmental Compliance and Realty Group, Resource Management Office (Mead Bldg), Lower Colorado Regional Office, Bureau of Reclamation, P.O. Box 61470, Boulder City, NV 89006-1470; or (2) Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Regional Liaison, 1849 C St. NW, Washington, DC 20240, telephone (202) 208-6269.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. James Green at (702) 293-8519.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The DPEA describes the present status of river operations in the Lower Colorado River Basin and analyzes potential impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed rule. A programmatic approach has been adopted because many of the details of specific interstate agreements under the proposed rule cannot be ascertained at this time. Such agreements would be subject to approval by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary). Appropriate environmental compliance documentation will be prepared on a case-by-case basis prior to the Secretary's approval of an interstate agreement. The public comment period for the proposed rule and the DPEA will run concurrently. Comments will be accepted through March 2, 1998. If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods. You may mail or hand-deliver comments to Mr. James Green at the address noted in **ADDRESSES** above. You

may also comment via the Internet at [bjohnson@lc.usbr.gov](mailto:bjohnson@lc.usbr.gov). If you comment via the Internet at this address please submit comments as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include "attn: AC1006-AA40" and your name and return address in your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your Internet message, contact us directly at (702) 293-8411. Upon request, Reclamation will hold informational meetings on the DPEA in January or February 1998. Reclamation will accept requests for informational meetings until 4:00 p.m. Pacific time on January 30, 1998. If Reclamation receives a request to hold an informational meeting(s), Reclamation will notify interested parties of the time and location of the meeting(s).

The DPEA has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) as amended, and (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508).

Dated: December 22, 1997.

**R. Steven Richardson,**

*Director, Policy and External Affairs.*

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