

Water Shortage

STAGE ONE - WATER WATCH



Colorado River Shortage Fact Sheet



What is happening?

Due to historic drought, hotter and drier conditions, and more water being used than nature can supply, the Colorado River is in crisis and reservoirs are declining at an alarming rate.

The wet winter, however, has offered some temporary relief and prevented Lake Powell and Lake Mead from reaching critical operational levels by lifting the elevation of Lake Mead to above 1050 feet. Under the current operating elevation guidelines, the United States Bureau of Reclamation has declared that the Colorado River will return to a Tier 1 Shortage for 2024.

A Tier 1 Shortage means Arizona will have access to slightly more Colorado River water in 2024 than under the current Tier 2a Shortage in 2023. Though, it is still less water than what Arizona has historically received.

Even though Colorado River supplies make up about half of the City of Mesa's water portfolio, the City continues to provide reliable water services to the community while strategically planning for a future with less water.

Mesa remains in a Stage One – Water Watch of the Water Shortage Management Plan.

- No mandatory water use reductions currently. Residents and businesses are encouraged to use water more efficiently. See our Water Conservation resources at www.mesaaz.gov/conservation.
- The City of Mesa will aim to cut its own water consumption at City facilities, including parks.

What is the City of Mesa doing?

The City of Mesa has proactively invested in infrastructure, water supplies, underground water storage and demand management programs. These preparations bring water resiliency and dependability to Mesa, especially during times of shortage.

- Managing and balancing the water needs of new growth, including policy changes to manage large water users and working with commercial/industrial customers on water sustainability plans.
- Maximizing efficiency in operations by utilizing industry best practice water auditing.
- Employing advanced technologies for pipe inspection and replacement to reduce water loss in the distribution system. Mesa has less water loss from main breaks and leaks than the national average.
- Using water efficiently in parks and along City streets by installing smart landscape controllers that monitor weather conditions and plant health and detect leaks.
- Adopting a comprehensive Water Shortage Management Plan to navigate various stages of shortage to maintain sustainable water supplies.
- Increasing the reuse of wastewater by providing effluent (treated wastewater) for agricultural use in exchange for approximately 8,000 acre-feet of vital surface water supplies a year.
- Investing in water supply resiliency projects to maximize the exchange of effluent for potable water supplies through the Central Mesa Reuse Pipeline - gaining an additional 12,000 acre-feet of water a year.
- Exploring sustainable and cost-effective water augmentation opportunities.
- Banking over 540,000 acre-feet of water stored in the aquifer as an important component to shortage and long-term planning.
- Expanding customer outreach and conservation programs to help residents and businesses take an active part in using water efficiently.
- Increasing monetary incentives for turf removal and irrigation efficiency improvements.
- Utilizing a four-tiered rate structure and implementing a drought commodity charge to encourage water conservation.
- Actively engaging in state and federal Colorado River discussions to advocate on behalf of Mesa residents to ensure water resiliency for the long term.
- Participating in a historic partnership with other water agencies to bolster Lake Mead levels with a 1,200 acre-feet contribution as part of the 500+ Plan.
- Doing our part, along with other valley cities, as Arizona takes the lead to address water shortage in the west.

What can you do?

While water conservation measures are currently voluntary, practical water-wise changes in lifestyle can significantly impact our community's water future. Water conservation and efficiency are vital to a sustainable future in the desert. To learn how you can help, visit www.mesaaz.gov/conservation for tips, tools, and resources to save water and money.

Drought and shortage are not short-term problems. Mesa remains committed to water-wise management and efficient water use to ensure sustainable growth and a thriving economy. To learn more about Mesa's Water Stewardship Strategy visit, www.mesaaz.gov/water.

¹ One acre-foot = 325,851 gallons