

Maintaining Opportunities for Colorado River Delta Flows

COOPERATIVE
CONSERVATION
ALTERNATIVE

Ensuring operations can accommodate future Binational agreements

The Colorado River Basin faces pressing and evolving challenges to its ecosystems and the diverse community of sovereigns and stakeholders who call it home. The Cooperative Conservation Alternative proposes maintaining opportunities for **Colorado River Delta Flows** to help advance our shared priorities.



Photo 1. (Left) The dry riverbed in the Colorado River Delta. Credit: Jennifer Pitt, Audubon

Photo 2. (Right) Restored habitat and flows in the Colorado River Delta. Credit: Claudio Contreras Koob, Audubon

COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

- **Stabilize storage** and avoid crisis management
- **Ensure mitigation and stewardship** is part of operations
- **Incentivize conservation** and operational flexibility
- **Maintain Cienega, Delta flows** and River connections
- **Call for parallel resilience** building processes

Binational agreements between the United States and Mexico, expiring in 2026, have modernized Colorado River management. Current agreements allow Mexico to share in shortages when Basin supplies are limited and surpluses when they are plentiful, store conserved water in Lake Mead, create binational investments in water conservation and partner with the United States and a binational coalition of NGOs to implement habitat restoration in the Colorado River Delta.

*The Cooperative Conservation Alternative does not propose terms for extension of current agreements with Mexico, but rather **allows for successful outcomes of future binational negotiations.***

The **Cooperative Conservation Alternative** seeks to:

- Define a Conservation Reserve that would allow Mexico to store conserved Colorado River water in Lakes Powell and Mead, calling for delivery of that water when requested
- Assess operations that include releases of water from Lake Mead for the Colorado River Delta, so that water for the environment can be considered in future binational negotiations
- Analyze impacts to water availability at the Cienega de Santa Clara, a large, federally protected wetland in Mexico that relies on Colorado River water-irrigated, agricultural drainage in the United States