
Basin Fund Preservation Act

The Glen Canyon Dam provides affordable hydropower to millions of people across the West, including Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Nebraska. Many local power providers, such as the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS) and the Utah Municipal Power Agency (UMPA), rely on this hydropower to serve their communities.

A federal decision issued last year requires water releases that bypass Glen Canyon Dam's hydropower generators in an effort to control smallmouth bass, a predator that threatens the ESA-listed humpback chub. These releases limit hydropower generation, forcing the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) to buy replacement power on the open market, often at much higher prices. These increased costs are passed on to cities, towns, and water districts and are also depleting the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund, which supports the operation and maintenance of critical infrastructure along the Colorado River.

To prevent unnecessary financial harm to communities and ensure reliable energy production, this bill requires the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to examine the financial impact of the federal decision, develop a plan for maintaining hydropower production, and ensure continued support for conservation efforts under the Endangered Species Act. By directing federal agencies to coordinate on solutions, the bill ensures that Western communities are not unfairly burdened with higher energy costs.

Last Congress, the Senate passed this bill by unanimous consent, reflecting broad bipartisan recognition of the need to protect affordable hydropower and the financial stability of the Basin Fund.

Bill Specifics

- The Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Commissioner of Reclamation, and the Secretary of Energy, acting through the Administrator of the Western Area Power Administration, in consultation with the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group, shall enter into a memorandum of understanding addressing the impact of the "Supplement to the 2016 Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan Record of Decision" on the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund.
- The MOU shall establish a plan addressing the effects of the Record of Decision on Upper Colorado River Basin Fund routine operations, maintenance, and replacement of critical infrastructure.
- That plan shall also address the impact the record of decision has on hydropower production at Glen Canyon Dam and on species listed as threatened or endangered under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act.

For more information concerning this bill or to be added as a cosponsor, please contact James Priest (James.Priest@energy.senate.gov) in Senator Lee's office.