

Water: June Lake Powell inflow just 13 percent of average

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Lake Powell from a NASA satellite in 2000.

2012 on track to be third-driest year in Colorado River Basin

By Summit Voice

SUMMIT COUNTY — Showing just how little snowpack there was, and how early it melted, June inflows into Lake Powell totaled just 13 percent of average, according to the [Bureau of Reclamation's latest update](#).

At 353,000 acre feet, the inflow was a little less than half of the amount of water that was released from Lake Powell to the Lower Colorado Basin states.

July inflow is projected to be even lower, at only 9 percent of average. Total inflow for the 2012 water year is now projected at about 5 million acre feet, which is about 46 percent of average and well above 2002, when inflow totaled just 2.46 million acre feet. That would make it the third-driest year on record for the Colorado River Basin, behind 1977 and 2002.

Based on the latest projections inflow through July will be about 2 million acre feet, just 28 percent of average. Since the start of the current water year (Oct. 1, 2011), system-wide storage has dropped by about 3 million acre feet, from 38.66 million acre feet down to 35.8 million acre feet as of July 1.

While Lake Powell is about 66 feet below its maximum elevation, the reservoir does have a bit of a cushion based on average inflows since 2005, when the Colorado River Basin came out of a multi-year drought.

Since 2005, the annual inflow has averaged about 10.98 million acre feet, which is very close to the long-term historic average. Inflow varied from a low of 8.62 million acre feet (80 percent of average) in 2006 to a high of about 16 million acre feet (147 percent of average) in 2011.

System-wide, storage in the basin has increased by more than 8 million acre feet since 2005. On Oct. 1, 2005, total storage was about 30 million acre feet, or about 50 percent of capacity.