

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT  
TO THE  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA**

**April 12, 2005**

**ADMINISTRATION**

*Dennis Underwood Named CEO and General Manager*

Mr. Dennis Underwood has recently been named the chief executive officer (CEO) and general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) to succeed Mr. Ron Gastelum, who retired on December 31, 2004. Prior to being named to this post, Dennis served as the vice president of Colorado River Resources at MWD, was the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1989 to 1993, and served as the Executive Director and Executive Secretary of the Colorado River Board of California from 1978 to 1989.

*Colorado River Board Sublease for Office Space*

The lease that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has with the current building owner, where both DWR and the Colorado River Board are housed, has expired. DWR is working with the building owner to extend its lease for an additional two years. Since the Colorado River Board's sublease with DWR has also expired, the Board needs to consider extension of its sublease with DWR.

*Fiscal Year 2005-2006 Budget for the Colorado River Board of California*

On March 30, 2005, the Assembly Subcommittee No. 3 on Natural Resources and Environmental Protection included the Colorado River Board's fiscal year 2005-2006 budget on the consent calendar, which was approved as budgeted. The Board's FY 2005-06 budget, which is funded 100 percent from reimbursements, totals \$1,237,000.

On the Senate side, the Board's FY 2005-06 budget will be heard by the Senate Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy on April 25, 2005. At this time there are no known issues with the Board's proposed budget.

Included in the Board's handout material is a copy of the Board's proposed FY 2005-06 Budget for the Board members information. At the June Board meeting, the standard agreement between the Board and the Six Agency Committee, which approves the funding arrangement between the Board and the Six Agency Committee, will be discussed and action taken.

## AGENCY MANAGERS MEETING

The agency managers have not met since the last Board meeting.

### PROTECTION OF EXISTING RIGHTS

#### Colorado River Water Report

As of April 7, 2005, storage in the major Upper Basin reservoirs decreased by 1,647,350 acre-feet and storage in the Lower Basin reservoirs increased by 990,200 acre-feet during March. Total System active storage as of April 7<sup>th</sup> was 31.144 million acre-feet (maf) or 52 percent of capacity, which is 0.657 maf less than one year ago.

March releases from Hoover, Davis, and Parker Dams averaged 6,950, 7,110 and 9,950 cubic feet per second (cfs), respectively. Planned releases from those three dams for the month of April 2005 are 17,500, 16,700, and 12,200 cfs, respectively. The April releases represent those needed to meet downstream water requirements.

As of April 7<sup>th</sup>, taking into account both measured and unmeasured return flows, the Lower Division States' consumptive use of Colorado River water for calendar year 2005, as forecasted by Reclamation, totals 7.125 maf and is described as follows: Arizona, 2.526 maf; California, 4.320 maf; and Nevada, 0.279 maf. The Central Arizona Project (CAP) will divert 1.384 maf, of which 0.129 maf are planned to be delivered to the Arizona Water Bank. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) will use about 0.638 maf, which is 112,000 acre-feet less than its 2004 predicted use of mainstream water.

The preliminary end-of-year estimate by the Board staff for 2004 California agricultural consumptive use of Colorado River water under the first three priorities and the sixth priority of the 1931 *California Seven Party Agreement* is 3.554 maf. This estimate, by Board staff, is based on the collective use through February 2005 by the Palo Verde Irrigation District, the Yuma Project-Reservation Division (YPRD), the Imperial Irrigation District, and the Coachella Valley Water District. Figure 1, found at the end of this report, depicts the historic projected end-of-year agricultural use for the year.

#### Colorado River Operations

##### *Mid-Year Review of the 2005 AOP*

As the 2005 Annual Operating Plan for the Colorado River System Reservoirs (2005 AOP) was developed there was discussion regarding the past five years of severe drought and the reduced available storage in the Colorado River System reservoirs. Specific attention was given to the reduced storage in Lake Powell and its projected level of storage if the drought were to continue. As a result of those discussions, it was

determined that it would be appropriate to have a mid-year review of the hydrologic conditions to determine if it was prudent to revise the minimum objective release from Glen Canyon Dam if the drought were to continue for another year. As stated in Secretary Norton's letter transmitting the 2005 AOP to the Governors of the seven Colorado River Basin states, "This mid-year review will take place during April 2005, and will be conducted expeditiously, to determine if the runoff forecast warrants an adjustment to the release amount from Lake Powell, beginning with the May volume, for water year 2005."

On March 29, 2005, Reclamation held its first consultation meeting regarding the mid-year review of the releases from Glen Canyon Dam. During that meeting Reclamation provided an update on the reservoir conditions and the projected runoff for water year 2005. During this consultation meeting, no comments were provided by the Basin states representatives or others regarding the need to revise the releases from Glen Canyon Dam. However, disagreement between the Upper Basin states and the Lower Basin states still exists on the desirability for the Secretary of the Interior to reduce the releases from Glen Canyon Dam below the minimum objective release of 8.23 maf during water year 2005. Further discussion is occurring among the Basin states representatives on this matter. The next scheduled consultation meeting on the mid-year review of the releases from Glen Canyon Dam is set for April 26<sup>th</sup> in Las Vegas, Nevada. Prior to this consultation meeting Reclamation will meet with representative from both the Upper and Lower Basins.

#### *NOAA Issues 2005 Spring Outlook*

Included in your Board folder is a copy of news release concerning the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 2005 Spring Outlook: Southwestern Drought Eases While Pacific Northwest Snowpack Levels Remain Low.

NOAA unveiled its 2005 Spring Outlook for April through June. In its Outlook, NOAA indicated that "one of the wettest winters on record has resulted in major reductions in the area and severity of drought in the Southwest and the Colorado River Basin – the first time this has occurred in five years." "The same winter climate patterns that brought record rainfall and deadly mudslides to California has lessened drought conditions that have plagued portions of the Southwest since 1999. However, one season of improvement does not bring complete drought relief." "Short-term drought concerns have been alleviated in many areas of the Southwest especially southern California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado. Preliminary data show that the Southwest had its wettest September-February in 110 years of record keeping. Abundant snowpack in the Upper Colorado Basin is resulting in above-normal inflow to the region's reservoirs." The unusual southward shift in the winter storm track that helped the Southwest has resulted in deficient rain and snow to the north.

NOAA's experts expect the currently weak El Nino conditions to continue to fade with a return to neutral conditions during the spring. Neither El Nino nor La Nina will be an influencing factor in weather and climate patterns across the U.S. this season.

NOAA's seasonal outlook calls for warmer-than-normal temperatures in parts of the West and Southwest. Drier-than-normal conditions are expected in Hawaii and parts of Florida and California.

The latest Seasonal Drought Outlook indicates drought is likely to continue across the Northwest and northern Rockies into June, with only some temporary improvement for parts of the region.

*Lake Powell: Heavy Snows and a Wet Spring will Raise Water Level for the First Time in Five Years*

Included in the Board folder are news releases from The Salt Lake Tribune, Los Angeles Times, and Voice of America regarding the water level at Lake Powell.

A wet autumn, followed by an even wetter winter and a fairly moist spring are coming together to raise the water level at Lake Powell, for the first time in five years. Reclamation officials predict that water level at Lake Powell will rise between 45 and 50 feet this spring and summer. That 45- to 50-foot climb in Lake Powell's water level translates into about 8 maf of water. In terms of precipitation, Reclamation's forecast is about 101 percent of normal. As compared to previous five years, even an average precipitation is notable:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Precipitation (percent of normal)</u>
2000	62
2001	59
2002	25
2003	51
2004	51
2005	101

As shown in the above table, inflow to Lake Powell has been well below average for the past five years. Due to five years of drought, the water level at Lake Powell has dipped to 3,557 feet, its lowest level point since the early 1960s. With the spring runoff, it is expected that Lake Powell's water surface level will climb from its current elevation of 3,557 feet to just over 3,600 feet by July. That is still about 100 feet below the reservoir's maximum capacity, which is at elevation 3,700 feet. Mr. Barry Wirth, Reclamation spokesman, noted that he expected the reservoir to bottom out in early April and reach its runoff peak in mid-July.

The five-year drought has revealed a bounty of magnificent rock formations and American Indian art and artifacts in Glen Canyon that have been submerged since the early 1960s, when Glen Canyon Dam was closed. Now, an environmental group, the Glen Canyon Institute, is asking that the increased runoff projected for Lake Powell be shipped down to Lake Mead so these canyon jewels can be appreciated once again. But U.S. Interior Secretary Gale Norton says both lakes are needed and "We have only been able to withstand five years of very severe drought in the West because we had water

stored in Lake Powell and Lake Mead.”

*Integrated Water Management Plan Evaluation for Salton Sea – A Review of the Salton Sea Authority’s Preferred Project Concept for Rehabilitating the Salton Sea*

The U.S. Geological Survey’s Salton Sea Science Office convened an experts workshop, from November 15-17 in Riverside, California. The purpose of this workshop was to evaluate a Salton Sea rehabilitation proposal known as the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP). The objective of the evaluation process was to develop a credible description of the future physical and biological conditions created by implementation of the IWMP. A compilation of the IWMP workshop proceedings was funded by Reclamation.

The IWMP, also called the “North Lake Plan”, would consist of a causeway across the middle of the current Salton Sea, creating a smaller north lake that discharges into a proposed 20,000 acres of shallow-water wetlands in the southern portion of the Sea and a terminal brine pool, as well as various treatment wetlands.

The water conservation and transfer activities associated with the recently executed Quantification Settlement Agreement, along with several unrelated actions, will significantly decrease the volume of water flowing into southeastern portion of the Salton Sea in the next 20 years, shrinking the Sea and increasing salinity beyond the tolerances of most the species currently present. Future conditions at the Sea will be very different from current conditions, whether or not the IWMP is implemented. A copy of Executive Summary of IWMP is included in the Board folder.

A second series of public meetings are being held to provide information on the process the State of California proposes to use to identify Ecosystem Restoration Alternatives for the Slaton Sea, as stipulated in the 2003 Colorado River Quantification Settlement Agreement and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration legislation. Three meetings are scheduled to be held on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and April 21<sup>st</sup> throughout the Salton Sea area. A copy of meeting notice is included in the handout material.

Basin States Discussions

*Basin States’ Meetings of March 18<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and April 4<sup>th</sup>*

Discussions among the Basin states representatives are continuing. Recent discussions have focused on the releases from Glen Canyon Dam and the potential for conjunctive management of releases and storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. There has been little discussion regarding development of interim shortage guidelines.

The studies that have been run by the Technical Committee indicate that there may be some advantages to conjunctive management of the releases and storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. However, until this year’s mid-year review of the releases from

Glen Canyon Dam has been completed, there is little opportunity for the Basin states representatives to make further progress in these discussions.

### Colorado River Environmental Activities

#### *Status of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP)*

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) has entered into a new phase. After over 10 years of completing the plan development phase, the program has now moved into the implementation phase. On April 4, 2005, the various documents necessary to move the LCR MSCP into the implementation phase were executed at a signing ceremony below Hoover Dam. The signing ceremony was well attended by the federal government and the permittees from each of three states (Arizona, California, and Nevada).

The documents related to the federal environmental compliance that were executed at the signing ceremony included the Funding and Management Agreement (FMA), Implementation Agreement (IA), and USFWS Section 10 Incidental Take Authorization Permit. In addition to the federal environmental compliance, the California parties received State environmental compliance. The documents that were executed related to the California environmental compliance included the California Funding Agreement, a Memorandum of Agreement with Reclamation regarding implementation of the program and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Section 2081 Incidental Take Authorization Permit.

The final meeting of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) Steering Committee was held on April 5, 2005. At that meeting the plan development Steering Committee turned over all remaining closeout activities to the newly formed implementation Steering Committee, which will hold its organizational meeting on May 13, 2005.

## **WATER QUALITY**

### Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum Work Group

As reported at the March Board meeting, the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum Work Group (Work Group) will hold a meeting on April 13-14, 2005, in Salt Lake City to discuss preparation of the 2005 Triennial Review Report. Following the Salt Lake City meeting, the Work Group will begin preparation of the first draft report, which will be reviewed by Work Group members. A final draft of the report will be prepared and distributed to the Forum Members during the first week of May. The draft report will be considered for Forum approval at its June 2005 meeting in Grand Junction, Colorado. As I mentioned at the March Board meeting, if the Forum approves the draft report, then public hearings will be scheduled in the Basin to receive comments

on the Triennial Review Report. The final draft report will be presented to the Forum at its October 2005 meeting, at which time, final approval and adoption is expected.

Each of the agencies is reminded and encouraged to submit their testimony to the appropriate Congressional committees, providing support of the appropriations for the salinity control program. The instructions for submitting the testimony was distributed at the March Board meeting. The deadline for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies was April 8<sup>th</sup>; however, you should submit your testimony as soon as you can if you have not done so yet. The deadline for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies is April 15<sup>th</sup> and the deadline for the Senate Energy and Water Subcommittee is April 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### PG&E Topock Gas Compressor Station Site

Following the earlier September 9, 2004, letter from Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) regarding ADEQ's concerns of possible groundwater plume contamination of hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)) spreading into the Arizona groundwater beyond the Colorado River, both Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and ADEQ are working together to identify existing monitoring wells in Arizona to be studied.

After a high level (354 parts per billion) of total chromium was detected at the depth of 90 to 100 feet below the ground surface in a monitoring well on Topock site, about 60 feet away from the Colorado River, the ADEQ wrote a letter to the California DTSC. That letter expressed ADEQ's concerns that "the potential threat to Arizona groundwater and surface water resources from the plume has increased significantly." A copy of ADEQ's letter is included in the Board folder for your reference. Because of its concerns, ADEQ will perform a study to determine whether the plume has contaminated Arizona's groundwater. In response to this situation, PG&E has offered to pay more than \$350,000 for a study of possible groundwater contamination in several communities on the Arizona side of the River.

So far, there are no data indicating any chromium VI contamination has migrated into Arizona's groundwater basins. A DTSC official has indicated that any chromium VI that might turn up in Arizona wells could be caused by the presence of naturally occurring background reading, or could be linked to alleged pollution from a nearby El Paso Corp. natural gas compressor plant on the Arizona side of the Colorado River. A copy of news release from Los Angeles Times is included in the Board material.

#### Moab Uranium Mill Tailings Site

Included in the Board folder are copies of news releases from various sources, such as Associated Press, etc. regarding cleanup at the Moab nuclear waste site.

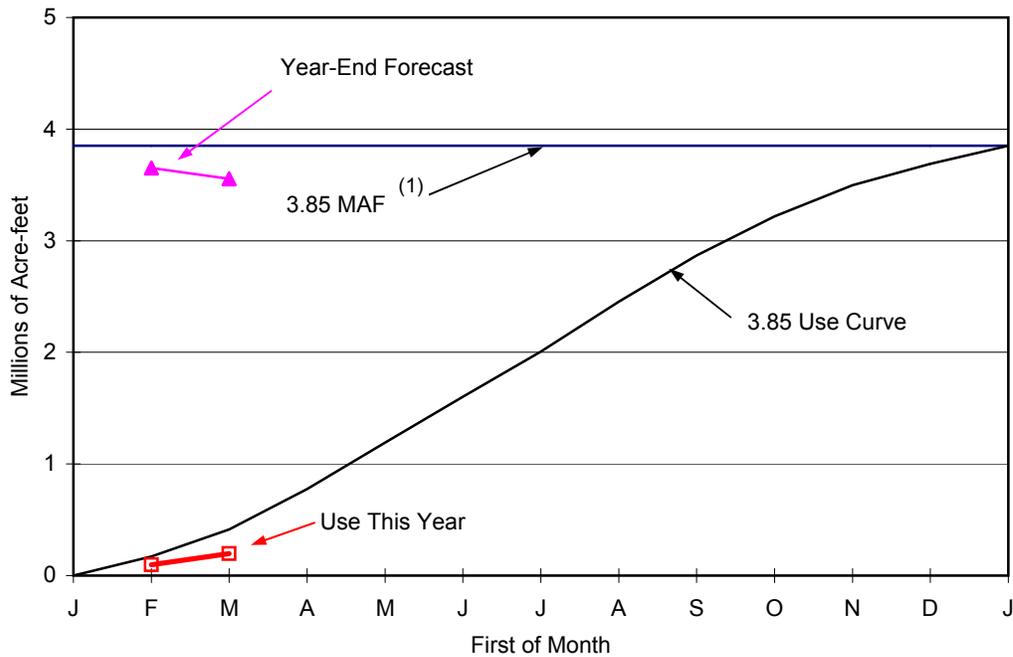
The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, that it will move millions of tons of radioactive uranium processing waste off the banks of the Colorado River near Moab, Utah. The pile covers 130 acres near the town of Moab, Utah, and consists of about 12 million tons of dirt and other waste from decades of uranium ore processing. It contains toxic chemicals and traces of uranium and other radioactive substances. The cleanup would cost an estimated \$407 to \$472 million depending how the off-site waste disposal is accomplished, i.e., by rail, truck, or pipeline.

The immediate reason for concern is that the waste is seeping into the soil, getting into groundwater and migrating toward the Colorado River. The larger fear is that a major flood on the Colorado River could wash the contaminated material into the River, which is source of drinking water supplies to about 25 million people in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix and other cities in the Colorado River Basin.

California's Senator, Dianne Feinstein, has urged the Department of Energy to select the preferred alternative for off-site disposal and to provide the necessary funding to implement it. A copy of the news release is included in the handout material.

  
Gerald R. Zimmerman  
Executive Director

**FIGURE 1**  
**APRIL 1 FORECAST FOR 2005 YEAR-END COLORADO RIVER WATER USE**  
**BY THE CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL AGENCIES**



Forecast of Colorado River Water Use by the California Agricultural Agencies (Millions of Acre-feet)			
Month	Use as of First of Month (1)	Forecast of Year End Use	Forecast of Unused Water (2)
Jan	0.000	-----	-----
Feb	0.097	3.653	0.053
Mar	0.197	3.554	0.152
Apr			
May			
Jun			
Jul			
Aug			
Sep			
Oct			
Nov			
Dec			
Jan			

"(1) February 2005 IID 660 report unavailable, January 2005 values used for IID use.

(2) The forecast of unused water is based on the availability of 3.713 MAF under the first three priorities of the water delivery contracts. This accounts for the 101,900 acre-feet of conserved water available to MWD during 2004 in accordance with the 1988 IID-MWD Conservation Agreement and the 1989 IID-MWD-CVWD-PVID Agreement, as amended; and 35,000 AF of conserved water available to SDCWA in accordance with the IID-SDCWA Transfer Agreement, as amended. As USBR is charging disputed uses by Yuma Island pumpers to priority 2, the amount of unused water has been reduced by those uses - - 0.007 maf. The CRB does not concur with the USBR's viewpoint on this matter.