

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

**October 11, 2011**

**ADMINISTRATION**

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – September 14, 2011

A copy of the draft September 14<sup>th</sup> Board meeting minutes have been included in the Board folder for review and consideration. I am respectfully requesting the Board's adoption and approval at the regularly scheduled Board meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

**PROTECTION OF EXISTING RIGHTS**

Colorado River Water Report

As of October 1, 2011, storage in the major Upper Basin reservoirs decreased by 489,420 acre-feet and storage in the Lower Basin reservoirs increased by 178,400 acre-feet during September 2011. Total System active storage as of October 2<sup>nd</sup> was 38.662 million acre-feet (maf), or 65 percent of capacity, which is 5.621 maf more than one year ago (Upper Basin reservoirs increased by 2.651 maf and Lower Basin reservoirs increased by 2.970 maf).

September releases from Hoover, Davis, and Parker Dams averaged 11,260, 12,070 and 9,040 cubic feet per second (cfs), respectively. Planned releases from those three dams for the month of October 2011, are 7,100, 9,600, and 7,100 cfs, respectively. The October releases represent those needed to meet downstream water requirements including those caused by reduced operation of Senator Wash Reservoir and storage in the Warren H. Brock (Drop 2) Reservoir.

As of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, taking into account both measured and unmeasured return flows, the Lower Division states' consumptive use of Colorado River water for calendar year 2011, as forecasted by Reclamation, totals 7.342 maf and is described as follows: Arizona, 2.791 maf; California, 4.295 maf; and Nevada, 0.257 maf. The Central Arizona Project (CAP) will divert 1.589 maf, of which 0.134 maf are planned to be delivered to the Arizona Water Bank. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) will use about 0.714 maf, which is 385,000 acre-feet less than its 2010 use of mainstream water.

The preliminary end-of-year estimate by the Board staff for 2011 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 3.615 maf. This estimate is based on the collective use, through August 2011, 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 projected end-of-year agricultural use for the year.

As of October 9<sup>th</sup>, the water level at the Lake Mead was at 1,117.87 feet above the mean sea level, and the storage was 13.153 maf, 50.8 percent of capacity, while the water level at Lake Powell was at 3,652.14 feet above the mean sea level and the storage was 17.484 maf, 72.9 percent of capacity.

### Colorado River Operations

#### *Reclamation's Approval of Calendar-Year 2011 Diversions for the Imperial Irrigation District and The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, Reclamation notified the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) that Reclamation had approved each entity's proposed diversion amounts of Colorado River water for Calendar-Year 2011 (CY-2011). The total approved diversion amount for IID in CY-2011 was 2,858,000 acre-feet. Reclamation approved a total diversion for MWD during CY-2011 of 611,900 acre-feet. Copies of the letters from Reclamation to IID and MWD have been included in the Board folder.

#### *Status of the Flaming Gorge Pipeline Proposal (Aaron Million Project)*

On September 15<sup>th</sup> the *Denver Post* published an article indicating that the Colorado Water Conservation Board had voted to spend up to \$72,000 for a six-month study that would explore and evaluate the legal issues, costs, and potential environmental impacts associated with the Flaming Gorge Pipeline concept. The Board also indicated that it would be willing to spend an additional \$100,000 if the initial study determines that the pipeline project may be feasible. According to the news article, an earlier study commissioned by the Board had found that a similar pipeline project could cost as much as \$9 billion, making the water delivered the most expensive in Colorado history. A copy of the *Denver Post* article has been included in the Board folder.

### Basin States Discussions

#### *Status of Binational Discussions/Negotiations*

Several meeting regarding the ongoing discussions to develop a comprehensive minute with Mexico dealing with the creation and delivery of Intentionally Created Mexican Apportionment (ICMA), the conversion of ICMA to Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) for use within the United States, surplus and shortage sharing, and the pursuit of new water and environmental projects. As reported at the September Board meeting, the Bi-National discussions have focused on dealing with the technical aspects of salinity and hydrology. Modeling of both of these parameters is continuing. A meeting was held by the Bi-National hydrology group on September 29<sup>th</sup> in San Diego.

Although it appears that little substantive progress is being made, the objective still remains to have a signed minute, acceptable to both countries, by the beginning of next year. As reported at the September Board meeting, the United States has provided Mexico with an Exploratory Cooperative Bi-National Package that contains the possible elements of a Bi-National package. This package is still being reviewed by Mexico. A federal Leadership Team meeting will be held in El Paso, Texas, on October 27<sup>th</sup> to further explore moving forward with a Bi-National package. Two state observers will be able to attend this meeting.

### *Status of Basin Study*

Progress is being made in completing the Basin Study. A Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Workshop was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 4<sup>th</sup>. During the workshop, the focus was on describing the current trends scenario for each of the Basin states and quantifying demands for each of the four alternative scenarios. For California, further work is needed to provide consistency in the projected demands.

A meeting is being held, following the Colorado River Board meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> to finalize the demands under the current trends scenario. When the current trends data is finalized, the demand and trends spreadsheet tool that has been developed by Reclamation will be used to analyze the demands and to project the demands for each of the other possible future scenarios. The next Project Team meeting will be held on October 13<sup>th</sup>. During this meeting the initial draft of the demand scenarios will be discussed.

To assist in moving the study toward completion, a small group is being formed to begin to look at draft strategies and options associated with each scenario. The membership on this small group has been identified and this group had its initial conference call on October 6<sup>th</sup>. This group is reviewing materials related to the information submittal form and the proposed outreach schedule and approach. The intent of this activity is to obtain broad and diverse input from the public and technical representatives on the options and strategies for meeting the imbalance between water supply and demand under each of the possible alternative scenarios.

### *Basin States Technical Committee Meeting, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 5, 2011*

Mr. Zimmerman and I attended a meeting of the Basin States' Technical Committee that was held on October 5<sup>th</sup> at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada. The purpose of the meeting was the following: (1) provide basinwide hydrologic and weather forecast updates; (2) discuss upcoming forecast and modeling changes; (3) Glen Canyon Dam operations; (4) status of bi-national discussions with Mexico; and (5) specific project updates or status reports.

Reclamation reported that as of the end of the water-year (September 30<sup>th</sup>), Powell was at water surface elevation 3,653 feet, with 17.6 MAF in storage. Full equalization of the two primary reservoirs was not fully achieved within WY-2011. This was due to power-plant release limitations at the Glen Canyon Dam facility. Consequently, an additional 1.233 MAF remains to be released to achieve full equalization between Lakes Powell and Mead; which Reclamation believes can be released prior to December 31, 2011. Also, Reclamation's "most probable"

unregulated inflow scenario projection for the 2012 Annual Operating Plan for WY-2012 is 12.6 MAF, or 105% of normal. This projection is based upon the August 2011 24-Month Study. Reclamation reported that there was approximately 30 feet of filling in Lake Mead during WY-2011.

There was significant discussion at the meeting about the updating and refinements that are being made to the various modeling tools utilized by the Colorado River Forecast Center (CRFC) and Reclamation. In a nutshell, the CRFC is in the process of updating and recalibrating the model it uses. The WY-2012 forecasts will be based upon the 1981-2010 time series (which happens to be the driest 30-year period on record). The WY-2011 forecasts were based upon the 1971-2000 time series for averages and statistical predictions. In other words, every ten years, the CRFC advances the 30-year time series used by 10 years. Advancing into this new time series appears to reduce the average inflow amounts into upper basin reservoirs by as much as perhaps 18% (Flaming Gorge) to a 4% reduction in the runoff past the gage at Cameo on the Colorado River. Moving into this new time series indicates that the mean inflow into Lake Powell may be reduced annually by about 11%. The CRFC is in the midst of completing its recalibration of its models, but should be completed in November, and expects to fully implement the updated and recalibrated model with the new 30-year time series on January 1, 2012.

Concurrent with the efforts of the CRFC, Reclamation is in the process of shifting from its “three-gage method” of calculating inflow into Lake Powell in the 24-Month Study to using a more accurate “mass balance forecast method.” For the past 26 months, Reclamation has run the 24-Month Study using both methods, and the “mass balance” method out-performed the “three-gage” method in 17 of 26 months. It appears that shifting to the “mass balance” method will result in Reclamation being able to more tightly project water surface elevations and storage volumes in the upper basin reservoir system. Reclamation will begin implementing the new computational mass balance method in developing future 24-Month Study reports on January 1, 2012. Finally, Reclamation and the CRFC each indicated that they are committed to working together very closely and coordinating in the development and issuance of hydrologic and precipitation forecasts that meet the needs of the stakeholders throughout the Colorado River Basin.

A researcher from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) made a presentation on the precipitation outlook for the Colorado River Basin this winter. His data seems to indicate that this will be a “mild to moderate La Nina” year, and that it may be somewhat of a dry fall and early winter, but that we could end up with a near-normal snowpack and runoff in the spring of 2012. He speculated that the inflow into Lake Powell could be reduced by 1.4 MAF from that seen this spring.

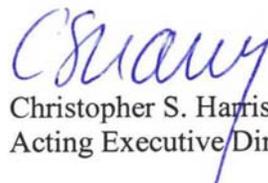
Finally, Reclamation also reported that during WY-2011 (i.e., October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011) that 90,300 AF was conserved in Brock Reservoir, and an additional 84,000 AF was conserved in Senator Wash Reservoir. Because of this improved ability to better manage, capture, and conserve flow releases below Parker Dam, Reclamation reported that only 54,700 AF were considered as “excess flows to Mexico” this year.

## Colorado River Environmental Issues

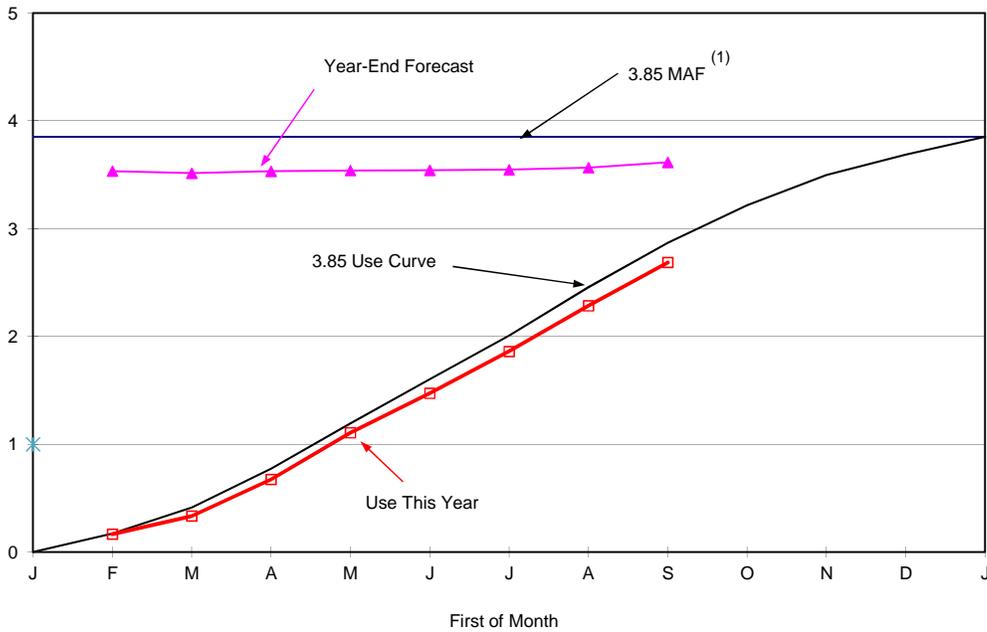
### *Comments on the Revised Critical Habitat Designation for the Endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher*

As was mentioned in the August 2011 Board information packet, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recently published a notice in the *Federal Register* indicating that it had issued a proposed rule revising its designation of critical habitat for the endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher (WIFL). The proposed rule was issued on August 15<sup>th</sup> (76 *FR* No. 157, 50542-50629), and comments on the proposed rule are due on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

I have prepared a draft comment letter in response to the proposed rule revising WIFL critical habitat. The primary comment that the Board makes in the draft letter is that the entire planning area of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) should be excluded from designation as critical habitat for the WIFL. It should be said that this generally the case in the proposed rule, with the notable exception of lands owned and managed by the USFWS as National Wildlife Refuges (i.e., Havasu, Bill Williams River, Cibola, and Imperial National Wildlife Refuges). An existing section of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Section 4(b)(2), does permit the exclusion of lands within an approved “habitat conservation plan” from critical habitat designation for a species being covered under that plan. In other words, the LCR MSCP is currently committed to restoring and maintaining habitat for the endangered WIFL and undertaking other significant conservation measures on the behalf of the species, and therefore critical habitat need not be designated for the WIFL within the planning area of the LCR MSCP. Another important comment is that proposed critical habitat for the WIFL has been delineated and designated within the full pool of Lake Mead. This designation should be excluded as any potential suitable habitat in this area would be subject to inundation or desiccation as the water surface elevation of Lake Mead rises and falls over time, and because Reclamation has no discretionary control over Lake Mead water surface elevations. Finally, the Board’s letter also fully supports and endorses the general and specific comments contained within the Bureau of Reclamation’s comment letter. A preliminary draft of the Board’s comment letter has been included as hand-out material for the meeting.

  
Christopher S. Harris  
Acting Executive Director

**FIGURE 1**  
**OCTOBER 1, 2011 FORECAST OF 2011 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	Forecast of Year End Use	Forecast of Unused Water (1)
Jan	0.000	-----	-----
Feb	0.167	3.533	0.009
Mar	0.335	3.514	0.028
Apr	0.674	3.531	0.011
May	1.107	3.539	0.004
Jun	1.473	3.541	0.001
Jul	1.861	3.546	-0.004
Aug	2.285	3.566	-0.023
Sep	2.686	3.615	-0.073
Oct			
Nov			
Dec			
Jan			

(1) The forecast of unused water is based on the availability of 3.542 MAF under the first three priorities of the water delivery contracts. This accounts for the 85,000 af of conserved water available to MWD under the 1988 IID-MWD Conservation agreement and the 1988 IID-MWD-CVWD-PVID Agreement as amended; 80,000 AF of conserved water available to SDCWA under the IID-SDCWA Transfer Agreement as amended being diverted by MWD; as estimated 29,000 AF of conserved water available to SDCWA and MWD as a result of the Coachella Canal Lining Project, 67,700 AF of water available to SDCWA and MWD as a result of the All American Canal Lining Project; 14,500 AF of water IID and CVWD are forbearing to permit the Secretary of the Interior to satisfy a portion of Indian and miscellaneous present perfected rights use and 25,000 AF of water IID is conserving to create Extraordinary Conservation Intentionally Created Surplus. 0 AF has been subtracted for IID's Salton Sea Salinity Management in 2011. As USBR is charging uses by Yuma Island pumpers to priority 2, the amount of unused water has been reduced by those uses - 6,530 AF. The CRB does not concur with USBR's viewpoint on this matter.