

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

**March 10, 2014**

**ADMINISTRATION**

**Minutes of the February 12, 2014 Meeting of the Colorado River Board**

A copy of the draft Board meeting minutes from the meeting held on February 12, 2014 has been included in the Board packet for your review.

**Announcements**

On February 27, 2014, the U.S. Senate confirmed Mike Connor as the Deputy Secretary for the Department of the Interior, after a seven-month confirmation process. Although he will take on several new areas of responsibility within the Department, it is anticipated that Mr. Connor will retain at least some role with respect to California water issues, negotiations with Mexico and drought-related issues within the Colorado River Basin.

On March 6, 2014, the Department of the Interior announced that Estevan Lopez, the Director of New Mexico's Interstate Stream Commission has been nominated to be the new Commissioner of Reclamation. Mr. Lopez has served as New Mexico's Colorado River Basin representative for several years and is very familiar with Colorado River issues. It is unclear how long the Senate confirmation process for Mr. Lopez will take but in the interim, Lowell Pimley has been designated as the acting Commissioner. Mr. Pimley has worked for the Bureau of Reclamation for over thirty years and most recently served as the Deputy Commissioner for Operations in D.C.

On March 3, 2014, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Anne Castle visited Los Angeles and met with representatives of the Colorado River Board regarding drought issues and the Basin States' contingency planning efforts.

On March 4, 2014, the President released his proposed Budget for Fiscal-Year 2015. The proposed Budget for the Department of the Interior includes over \$1 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation and prioritizes ways to "ensure healthy watersheds and sustainable, secure water supplies". The Department's Budget highlights the efforts within the Colorado River Basin to address drought relief strategies. It is unknown how quickly the Budget will move forward through the Congressional Budget process, or what level of funding will ultimately be approved.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORT AND CALIFORNIA DROUGHT UPDATE**

As of March 3, 2014, the water level at Lake Mead was at 1,107 feet with 12.44 million acre-feet (maf) of storage, or 48% of capacity, while the water level at Lake Powell was at 3,575 feet with 9.56 maf of storage, or 39% of capacity. The total System active storage as of March 2 was 28.77 maf, or 48% of capacity, which is 3.64 maf less than one year ago when the System storage was at 54% of capacity. As of March 3, 2014, the Upper Colorado River Basin reservoirs other than Lake Powell ranged from 39% to 92% of their full capacities.

The unregulated inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year 2014, based on Reclamation's February mid-month forecast dated February 18, 2014, is forecast to be 10.9 maf, or 101% of average. As of March 3, 2014, the Upper Basin snowpack was at 115% of average and the Water Year 2014 precipitation to date was at 106% of average. The Colorado River Basin Forecast Center's Snow Conditions Map dated March 3, 2014, indicates that virtually all areas in the Upper Basin are experiencing above average snowpack conditions.

The National Weather Service's Monthly Precipitation Maps indicate January and February 2014 continued to demonstrate extensive areas of extreme drought within the Basin although increasing levels of precipitation were seen in the Upper Basin in February. The Drought Monitor map for February 25, 2014 indicates that most portions of the Western U.S. continue to be experiencing at least some level of drought conditions, with most of California still experiencing extreme or exceptional drought conditions.

As was noted during the February Board meeting, on January 17, 2014, Governor Brown declared a drought State of Emergency and identified 20 separate actions that should be implemented to help address the drought conditions. The Department of Water Resources has continued to issue weekly Drought Briefs to provide updates on current conditions and key action items taking place regarding the drought. On March 1, 2014, Governor Brown signed legislation passed in California to help alleviate drought conditions that included \$687.4 million in funding measures.

On February 14, 2014, President Obama visited California with Governor Brown and members of California's congressional delegation to review the Central Valley drought conditions. The President announced the availability of federal funding measures included in the farm bill for drought relief measures, and described direction given to the Department of the Interior to utilize as much flexibility as possible for water deliveries.

Regarding Lower Basin water uses, the Bureau of Reclamation has posted its provisional data to date for 2014, and the official accounting of the Lower Basin water uses, including deliveries to the Republic of Mexico, for calendar year 2013 will be compiled within the next few months as part of the Arizona v. California Decree Accounting Report. At present, Reclamation has published preliminary data regarding the end of year water uses for 2013, but adjustments are expected as the Decree accounting process advances.

## COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM REPORTS

### Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study

Over the past few months, all three workgroups (municipal conservation, agricultural conservation and environmental flows) have been working to finalize their respective data collection efforts. To date, the data collection process for each of the workgroup is almost complete. The next meetings for each of the workgroups are scheduled for mid-March and early-April. Drafts of the Phase 1 reports are anticipated before the next Coordination Committee meeting in April.

The Environmental Flows workgroup identified focus reaches along the Bill Williams River, the mainstem of the Colorado River and the White River. The focus reaches will be used to assess current conditions along the reach, including examining existing programs and scientific uncertainties, and to explore opportunities to improve our knowledge of the reach which include investigating improvements to the CRSS model and/or the use of other models. Sub-teams will be formed to begin the focus reach analysis for each of the selected river reaches.

The M&I Workgroup has collected data from nearly all the Basin States regarding water conservation and reuse programs. Program data will be used to develop case study write-ups of conservation and reuse programs throughout the Basin.

The Agricultural Conservation Workgroup has collected data from all the Basin states that is currently being analyzed. To further analyze agricultural-related conservation and transfer activities in the Basin, four sub-teams have been formed to explore the implementation of Consumptive Use Reductions, On-Farm Efficiencies, and Conveyance System Improvements and Transfers activities throughout the Basin. The overall objective of the Sub-Teams is to discuss and document issues and challenges related to the activities, and to look for opportunities to overcome the challenges. Each sub-team will develop hypothetical case studies to highlight past or on-going programs in the Basin. The case studies will be used to identify successes and misconceptions in connection with the programs. Colorado River Board staff is participating on the sub-teams and will require assistance from Members during this process.

### Minute 319 Implementation

On February 18, 2014, the IBWC and CILA commissioners approved the January 14, 2014, Delivery Plan for Environmental Flows to the Colorado River Riparian Corridor Pursuant to Minute No. 319 submitted by the Basin States through the Consultative Council process referenced in Minute No. 319. The Delivery Plan was developed by federal, state, local and non-governmental entities in both countries and establishes a “schedule of monthly flows, delivery points and volumes in an amount of approximately 105,392 acre-feet” as required by Minute 319.

The pulse flow will occur in late-March and early-April of 2014 and a ceremony hosted by the Mexican delegation/CILA is planned for March 27 at Morelos Dam. Reclamation has

worked with potentially affected entities within the U.S. to address potential flooding damage and Reclamation will work closely with IID on the Delivery Plan details to ensure that the pulse flow will not disrupt regularly scheduled deliveries in the U.S. A significant amount of media attention is anticipated in connection with the pulse flow, which is a high priority for NGO organizations that have been working on the Mexican Delta issues for several years.

DOI/Reclamation, IBWC, CILA and Basin State representatives are also working on a monitoring plan to evaluate the operational, hydrologic and ecological conditions relative to the pulse flow. The proposed Delivery Plan also includes a plan for delivery of a base flow of approximately 52,000 acre-feet of water that would be utilized between 2014 and 2017 to maintain active and passive restoration areas.

Minute 319 implementation workgroups met in Tijuana on February 13-14 to continue to discuss details of a bi-national hydrology work plan to ensure the Mexican participants receive timely updates regarding hydrology and modeling, a potential bi-lateral connection between Mexico and the All American Canal and implementation of the proposed pilot projects in Mexico that would involve utilization of funding from the U.S. to pay for infrastructure improvements in Mexico to conserve Mexican water that will be converted to water for use within the U.S.

#### Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

The Salinity Control Program's Work Group met in Phoenix, Arizona, on February 26-28, 2014, to continue to develop the 2014 Triennial Review Report. Modeling scenarios are being run based upon the expected level of funding available from Reclamation, NRCS, and the Basin States' cost-share funding. The 2014 Review will not propose any change to the existing Numeric Criteria at the three stations (i.e., Hoover, Parker, and Imperial Dams). A draft of the 2014 Triennial Review will be a topic of discussion at the next meeting of the Salinity Control Forum in June.

The Work Group received updates from Reclamation regarding the 2014 Basinwide Program appropriations for 2014, the Paradox Alternatives Studies and EIS, Uinta and Lower Gunnison Basins Planning Studies and the refinement of the Salinity Economic Damages Model. The U.S. Geological Survey also provided an update on the recent Pah Tempe Springs experiment that was conducted in mid-February to collect data in order to determine if it would be feasible for the Salinity Control Program to implement a project to control the high saline spring discharges at the site.

A small workgroup of Salinity Forum members has been working to develop strategies to address the existing funding shortfall issues that the program is facing and to ensure the continued fiscal integrity of the Lower Basin Fund in maintaining an adequate revenue stream for implementation of the Salinity Control Program. The small group is looking at short term funding strategies as well as potential long-term structural fixes. Both approaches require consensus among the seven Basin States, Reclamation, and USDA, and could also require amendments to federal legislation. The next meeting of the funding sub-committee is scheduled for March 25 in Phoenix.

As previously reported, Reclamation anticipates expending approximately \$10 million through the Basinwide Program in 2014, which includes the Basin States' cost-share. BLM anticipates it will be allocated about \$750,000 for the Program through its Soil, Water and Air Program. NRCS anticipates its 2014 allocation will be just over \$12 million through the EQIP program, which was funded through the "Agricultural Act of 2014" signed by the President on February 7, 2014 through 2018.

The next Salinity Control Forum meeting is scheduled for June 12-13 in Wyoming.

#### Glen Canyon Dam—Adaptive Management Work Group and Long-Term Experimental Management Plan EIS Process

The Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) met in Tempe, Arizona, on February 19-20, 2014. At the meeting, Reclamation reported that based upon current hydrologic projections, the most probable release from Glen Canyon Dam in 2015 is likely to be 9.0 million acre-feet.

The AMWG meeting included a panel discussion on the "Potential Effects of Long-Term Drought on Colorado River Operations", from representatives of the National Park Service, the State of Nevada, the Colorado River Water Conservation District in Grand Junction, Colorado, and the USGS Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC). The panelists provided the AMWG with the different perspectives associated with managing Colorado River water and hydropower resources during periods of diminished supply. Tanya Trujillo commented on the current severe drought conditions within California and noted the actions already in place within California to maintain water uses within California's normal Colorado River annual apportionment.

The AMWG received a preliminary report on the results of the November 2013 High-Flow Experiment that was conducted to redistribute sediment from the Marble Canyon reach of the river further downstream. GCMRC reported that while a significant amount of sediment was successfully redistributed, a substantial amount still remains in the bed of the river below the confluence of the Paria River because the volume of the HFE was not large enough to mobilize and move all of the available sediment.

Dr. Jack Schmidt provided a preliminary overview of the GCMRC's Fiscal-Year 2015/2016 biennial budget including funding for various program elements including native fishes conservation and monitoring, and physical and natural sciences monitoring activities. The GCMRC will be working with the Budget Ad-hoc Group and the Technical Work Group to prepare the final proposed 2015/2016 budget that will then be brought to the AMWG for approval at its next meeting.

Reclamation and the National Park Service provided an update of the status of the Long-Term Experimental Management Plan (LTEMP) EIS that is being developed and reported that modeling of the LTEMP EIS alternatives is being performed now. Modeling results will be made available during a webinar on March 18 and an in-depth workshop is scheduled for March

31 and April 1. An additional “Structured Decision Analysis” exercise is anticipated in April to help DOI evaluate the relative values of various natural, physical, and cultural resources of the Glen and Grand Canyon reaches of the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam.

#### Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) Work Group will meet in Yuma, Arizona on March 12 to review proposed modifications to conservation measures for the western yellow bat, Arizona Bell’s vireo, and the Colorado River cotton rat. The minor modifications are being proposed based upon nearly ten years of data collection and monitoring results since initiation of the Program in 2005. These minor modifications will require the approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Following the Work Group meeting a tour of the Laguna Habitat Conservation Area has been scheduled for March 13. This 1,300-acre project is located in the reach of the river between Imperial and Laguna Dams. A significant amount of the water-routing infrastructure has been constructed and marsh and riparian vegetation has been planted throughout much of the site.

The LCR MSCP Steering Committee will hold its next meeting on April 23 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Tanya M. Trujillo  
Executive Director