

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

**August 10, 2015**

**ADMINISTRATION**

**Minutes of the June 10, 2015 Meeting of the Colorado River Board**

A copy of the draft minutes from the Board meeting held on June 10, 2015 is included in the Board packet for your review. No Board meeting was held during July.

**Lower Colorado River Water Supply Project Application**

Included in the packet for Board consideration is a Resolution regarding an application to utilize up to 2 acre-feet of water for domestic purposes for a residential structure in San Bernardino County. Colorado River Board staff has reviewed the application and determined that it meets the requirements of the Lower Colorado Water Supply Project and recommends that the Board approve the Resolution in support of the application. If approved by the Board, the applicant may then proceed through the subcontracting process with the City of Needles to obtain the right to utilize Project water.

**Presentation from the Bureau of Reclamation on Colorado River Hydropower Issues**

During the August 12 meeting, Reclamation will make a presentation regarding current hydropower issues at Hoover Dam, with an emphasis on the issues associated with lower elevation levels at Lake Mead.

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORT**

As of August 4, 2015, the water level at Lake Mead was at 1,078.6 feet with 9.89 million acre-feet of storage, or 38% of capacity. The water level at Lake Powell was at 3,612.5 feet with 12.98 million acre-feet of storage, or 53% of capacity. As of August 3, 2015, the total system storage was at 31.36 million acre-feet, or 53% of capacity, which is about 914,000 acre-feet more than where the system storage was at this time last year. As of August 3, 2015, the April-July runoff inflow forecast was 6.7 million acre-feet, or 94% of average, which is over 50% higher than had been anticipated prior to the receipt of above-average precipitation starting in May. As of August 2, 2015, most of the Upper Colorado River Basin reservoirs, other than Lake Powell, were close to full capacity.

Reclamation is expected to release the August 24-Month Study on Monday, August 17, which, pursuant to the 2007 Interim Guidelines for the Coordinated Operation of Lake Mead and Lake Powell, will be utilized in the Annual Operating Plan process to determine the operating tier for Lake Mead during 2016. Based on the most recent updates, there appears to be zero chance that Lake Mead's elevation will be projected to be less than 1,075 feet on January 1 and therefore, there is a zero probability that a Shortage Condition would be in effect during 2016. A webinar to

review the August 24-Month Study is scheduled for August 17.

The second consultation for the 2016 Colorado River Annual Operating Plan was held in Las Vegas, NV on July 28, 2015. Reclamation updated the group on the significant precipitation that had occurred in the Basin beginning in May 2015 and confirmed that Lake Powell is still expected to release 9.0 million acre-feet in 2015. As mentioned above, the official operating tiers for 2016 will be set based on the August 24-Month Study results. During the July 28, meeting, Tanya Trujillo updated the group on the status of California's implementation of California's Colorado River Water Use Plan and described the status of implementation of the Quantified Settlement Agreement and other strategies in place to ensure California can meet its water needs by relying primarily on its normal Colorado River allocation of 4.4 million acre-feet of water per year. This update satisfied the requirement in Section 5 of the 2007 Interim Guidelines for California to report to the Secretary on its progress in implementing the Colorado River Water Use Plan.

In April 2015, the U.S. Geological Survey and Reclamation jointly issued a Draft report entitled "Comparison of U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Reclamation Water-Use Reporting in the Colorado River Basin". The report provides information about the different types of water use reports in the Basin produced by each agency. The report notes that the different legislative and legal directives for each agency create the need for different types of water use information. Members of the Basin States Technical Committee submitted comments regarding the draft to the USGS on July 30, 2015.

### California Drought Update

The National Drought Monitor map indicates that during July 46% of the State continues to be in the "exceptional drought" category of drought. On July 30, the State Water Resources Control Board announced that California's urban water suppliers had exceeded the statewide conservation goal of reducing uses by 25% as compared to water use levels in 2013, despite recording the highest temperatures on record during June. Fire activity has continued to remain well above average, and on August 7, 2015, Governor Brown issued a State of Emergency in response to the wildfires burning across the state. The California National Guard has been deployed to assist with wildfire fighting activities, and approximately 600 Guard members have joined over 1,100 firefighters who are battling 19 active wildfires around the state.

The Department of Water Resources has issued an updated fact sheet titled, "Will El Nino make a Difference? Maybe Not", in response to recent forecast predictions that 2016 may see El Nino conditions develop. The fact sheet notes that there is almost no correlation between precipitation and El Nino conditions in Northern and Central California, and prior El Nino years have resulted in dry, average and wet conditions. On August 3, the Department of Water Resources issued an Agricultural Water Management Plan Guidebook to help water districts prepare water management plans pursuant to a 2009 legislative requirement, and the press release is included in the Board packet.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM REPORTS**

### Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

The activities of the Salinity Control Work Group were summarized in the July Executive Director's Report and centered on the meeting held in Salt Lake City on July 8-10, 2015. The

Work Group will meet again in September in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, and the next Forum meeting will be held in October in Tucson, Arizona. A meeting of the cooperating agencies involved with the EIS preparation for the Paradox Well Replacement project will be held in advance of the September Work Group Meeting.

#### Status of the implementation of Minute 319

On August 13, 2015, the bi-national group focused on discussion of a successor agreement to Minute 319 will meet at the IBWC offices in San Isidro, CA, but otherwise there have been no updates regarding the implementation efforts for Minute 319.

#### Status of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Stakeholders of the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) attended a Grand Canyon river trip on July 17-27, intended to provide an opportunity for tribal representatives, Federal employees, and stakeholders to discuss river management issues and share perspectives. Additionally, the U.S. Geological Survey Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC) announced in mid-July that it intended to fill the vacant GCMRC Chief Scientist position with Scott VanderKooi, previously the acting Chief.

The Department of the Interior released a draft of the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (LTEMP EIS) to the cooperating agencies at the end of June. Comments from cooperating agencies are due September 30 and it is anticipated that the public review draft of the LTEMP EIS will be released in winter 2015.

The next AMWG meeting will be in Tempe, AZ on August 26-27.

#### Status of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

As was reported in the July Executive Director's Report, the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program Steering Committee approved the proposed FY-2016 budget and work plan and finalized the *Final Implementation Report, Fiscal Year 2016 Work Plan and Budget, Fiscal Year 2014 Accomplishment Report*, which is available on the program's website, [www.lcrmsep.gov](http://www.lcrmsep.gov).

As an update to the information reported in July, on September 1, the Arizona Supreme Court will begin review of the June 11 district court ruling that struck down the Arizona Department of Water Resources's administrative decision approving the MSCP's Planet Ranch acquisition in response to objections that the County would be adversely impacted by the acquisition.

On August 8, a large wildfire broke out on the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge on the Colorado River in the Mohave Valley east of Needles, California. As of Monday, August 10, the fire had grown to nearly ten square miles, burned eleven structures, and forced the evacuation of over 1,000 persons from nearby residences adjacent to the refuge. At this point it is unclear if the fire has affected the LCR MSCP Beal Lake Conservation Area restoration site.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

During an investigation of an abandoned mine site near Durango, Colorado on August 5, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency triggered a release of contaminated water from the site that was discharged into the Animas River, a tributary of the San Juan River, which is a major tributary of the Colorado River. EPA has been coordinating with the Upper Basin States and the Navajo Nation on tracking the contamination and informing the public regarding the hazards associated with the released water. The website for the response efforts is:

[http://www.epaossc.org/site/site\\_profile.aspx?site\\_id=11108](http://www.epaossc.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=11108)

On July 29, 2015, Senators Feinstein and Boxer introduced the California Emergency Drought Relief Act, S. 1894, which contains provisions relating to California operations but also contains provisions that would apply to other Western states affected by drought conditions. It is anticipated that the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on the bill, and other drought-related legislation when the Senate resumes business during September.

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