

Minutes of Meeting
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, May 10, 2017

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California was held on Wednesday, May 10, 2017.

Committee Members and Alternates Present

Dana Bart Fisher, Jr., Chairman
Norma Sierra Galindo
Jeanine Jones

Glen D. Peterson
David R. Pettijohn, Vice-Chairman
Doug Wilson

Committee Members and Alternates Absent

Brian Brady
James Hanks
Christopher Hayes
Hank Kuiper
Peter Nelson

John Powell, Jr.
Jack Seiler
Michael Touhey
David Vigil

Others Present

Heather Baez
Melissa Baum-Haley
Karen Donovan
Robert Cheng
Christopher Harris
Bill Hasencamp
Brad Hiltcher
Joanna Hoff
Michael Hughes
Kevin Kelley
Jan Matusak
Vic Nguyen

Shanti Rosset
Steve Sanders
Joel Scalzitti
Pete Silva
Gerry Shoaf
Tina Shields
Warren Teitz
Gary Tavetian
Meena Westford
Mark Weston
Kimberlyn Velasquez

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fisher announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:06 A.M.

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Chairman Fisher invited members of the audience to address the Board on items on the agenda or matters related to the Board. Hearing none, Chairman Fisher moved to the next agenda item.

ADMINISTRATION

Chairman Fisher asked for a motion to approve the April 12, 2017 meeting minutes. Mr. Pettijohn moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Wilson, and with unanimous consent, the April 12, 2017 meeting minutes were approved.

Executive Director Christopher Harris noted that the proposed Colorado River Board's budget for FY 2017/2018 is \$2,141,000. Also, the Governor's budget is in the process of being revised and there may be minor adjustments made to that figure.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORTS

The Board's Principal Engineer, Mr. Vic Nguyen, reported that as of May 1, 2017, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,604.14 feet with 12.15 million acre-feet of storage, or 50% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,084.89 feet with 10.42 million acre-feet of storage, or 40% of capacity. As of May 1, 2017, the total system storage was 30.44 million acre-feet, which is 51% of capacity, and about 1.8 million acre-feet more than the system storage at this time last year.

Mr. Nguyen reported that on April 17, 2017, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) presented the April 24-Month study modeling results. Mr. Nguyen reminded the Board the 24-Month study is performed each month to project future reservoir conditions two years out given the existing reservoir conditions and current and projected inflows. Using the April 24-Month study results and rules established in the 2007 Interim Guidelines, it was determined that Lake Powell will release 9.0 million acre-feet for the remainder of Water Year-2017. The most probable Lake Powell release for Water Year-2018 is projected to be 11.5 million acre-feet. The maximum and minimum probable projected release from Lake Powell for Water Year-2018 is 14.4 million acre-feet and 9.0 million acre-feet, respectively.

Mr. Nguyen reported that on April 28, 2017, Reclamation presented the results from the Mid-Term Operational Model (MTOM) and the Colorado River Simulation System (CRSS) model projections for December 31, 2017 elevations. Lake Powell's elevation is projected to range from 3,613.88 feet to 3,675.10 feet, and Lake Mead's elevation is projected to range from 1,076.44 feet to 1,086.13 feet. Mr. Nguyen reported that the probability of shortage in the Lower Basin for 2018 is zero percent, and the probability of shortage in subsequent years in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 is 31%, 32%, 34%, and 39%, respectively. The probability of equalization in years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 is 45%, 35%, 34%, 31%, 32%, respectively.

Mr. Nguyen reported that the forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year-2017 is 12.97 million acre-feet, or 120% of normal. The forecasted April to July inflow is 8.8 million acre-feet, or 123% of normal. Precipitation to date for Water Year-2017 is 119% of normal, and the current basin snowpack is 119% of normal.

Mr. Nguyen reported that the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) held its last scheduled webinar for the season on May 1, 2017. The precipitation in April was below normal across much of the Basin, with some exceptions in the Upper Green and Yampa/White sub-basins. In March, there was significant snow melt due to warm temperatures but the snowpack recovered towards the end of the month. Similarly, in April, the runoff resumed but recovered slightly at the end of month. Mr. Nguyen noted that snow melt and warming temperatures led to record runoff volumes, particularly in the Upper Green River and the Duchesne Basin. Mr. Nguyen added that significant snowpack remains in parts of the Upper Green River, Duchesne and Gunnison River sub-basins and high runoff is anticipated. The forecast for May calls for a series of storms with warm and dry periods in between, and May rain events and snow melt have the potential to cause flooding.

Mr. Nguyen noted that the Basin received very significant precipitation between December 2016 and February 2017, which led to a period with one of the highest rates of accumulation of snow on record. He reported that as of May 3, 2017, the snow water equivalent for the Upper Basin snowpack was 126% of median. Mr. Nguyen also reported that storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, except for Lake Powell, ranged from 35% of capacity at Fontenelle in Wyoming, 82% of capacity at Flaming Gorge in Wyoming and Utah, 93% of capacity at Morrow Point and 79% of capacity at Blue Mesa in Colorado, and 94% of capacity at Navajo in New Mexico.

Mr. Nguyen reported that through May 4, 2017, Brock and Senator Wash reservoirs have captured 49,601 acre-feet and 29,147 acre-feet, respectively. He also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 7,000 acre-feet as of May 7, 2017. So far, in 2017, the total Bypass flows of saline drainage to the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico were 34,414 acre-feet.

Board Member Peterson asked whether the calculations for equalization releases take into account storage in Upper Basin reservoirs above Lake Powell. Mr. Harris responded that equalization releases are based on Lake Powell's projected elevation. Mr. Harris referred to the

Upper Basin Teacup diagram, noting that several of the reservoirs were close to capacity and that flood control operations may go into effect to accommodate the expected runoff. He added that the Flaming Gorge reservoir received a significant amount of inflow. Mr. Harris reported that Upper Basin reservoir storage and releases have been part of the Upper Basin Drought Contingency discussions, and that the Flaming Gorge reservoir is currently operating under a Record of Decision related to endangered fish activities below Flaming Gorge Dam. Board Member Wilson remarked that the probability for hitting a shortage trigger in Lake Mead has been greatly reduced, noting the probability for shortage in 2018 is now zero percent and previous projections in the August 2016 24-Month Water Supply report, before the Basin received record precipitation, were close to 40% or 50%. Mr. Harris added that Lower Basin conservation projects have helped increase the level of Lake Mead. The significant precipitation and improved reservoir levels have also increased the probability for equalization in 2018.

State and Local Reports

Mr. Nguyen reported that the California's drought conditions have significantly improved since last year based on the U.S. Drought Monitor maps. Ms. Jones, representing the California Department of Water Resources (CDWR), reported that the State received above average precipitation, especially in the Sierras. Ms. Jones explained that the precipitation in the Northern Sierra, San Joaquin, and Tulare was above average with the Northern Sierra 8-Station index ranked the wettest year on record in the Sacramento Valley. Ms. Jones reported that it will be a challenge to manage runoff from the Sierras due to the limited channel capacity downstream (for example, the San Joaquin river system).

Board member Peterson, representing The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that Diamond Valley Lake will be full by the end of the year. Capacity in the MWD's storage programs are being filled rapidly and a significant amount of Colorado River water is going into the Coachella Valley to replenish the aquifer. Many member agencies are conserving water as well as replenishing their storage systems to save water for the future.

Board member Pettijohn, representing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), noted that snow in the Eastern Sierra has been melting, and ski resorts such as at Mammoth Mountain would likely remain open for another month or so. Mr. Pettijohn reported that the Los Angeles aqueduct is projected to receive close to one million acre-feet of water but the demands in the city of Los Angeles are only about 500,000 acre-feet. He explained that the LADWP will spread about 200,000 acre-feet of the surplus water in the Owens Valley at various turn-outs along the LA Aqueduct to recharge the groundwater basin. He added that LADWP will also deliver surplus water to MWD through a finalized exchange agreement. Mr. Pettijohn noted that delivering surplus water to MWD will allow LADWP to protect its Owens Lake restoration infrastructure which was constructed to control dust on the Owens Valley Dry Lake bed.

STATUS OF COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS

Basin States Drought Contingency Planning and Minutes 319 and 32x

Mr. Harris reported that a draft of the new binational minute, Minute 32x, was completed in late December 2016 and has not undergone significant changes since then. The Mexican government recently reinstated its interest in moving forward with the Minute as drafted in late 2016, and efforts are intensifying to draft and finalize all of the domestic agreements required to implement the minute. The U.S. Technical Team met May 2-3 in Las Vegas, Nevada, and worked on the domestic agreements, using the agreements associated with Minute 319 as a starting point.

Mr. Harris noted that the major outstanding issue is linking the Mexican drought contingency activities, known as the Mexican Water Scarcity Contingency Plan, to the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (LB DCP). The two agreements are connected but are not expected to be finalized at the same time. Mr. Harris reported that a “Companion Agreement” has been drafted, which would outline the steps needed to finalize the LB DCP, and thereby triggering the Mexican Water Scarcity Contingency Plan.

In response to a question from Board Member Peterson, Mr. Harris reported that there is uncertainty over whether the LB DCP will require federal legislation. Some of the Basin States may feel more comfortable with federal legislation in place to increase certainty with respect to the reservation of rights associated with Law of the River. Mr. Harris noted that obtaining federal legislation could also be very time consuming.

Chairman Fisher reported that the group hopes that if the Minute 32x process is completed by late summer, the LB DCP process may be lined up for completion by December 2017 in time for the Colorado River Water Users Association’s annual conference.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

Mr. Harris reported that a cooperating agency meeting was held on April 12 on the Paradox Valley Unit EIS process. Reclamation projects completion of the draft EIS report by November of 2018, a final report in July of 2019, and a Record of Decision in late 2019. Reclamation continues to analyze the three alternatives considered in the EIS, including installing a second injection well, implementing brine crystallization technology, and constructing evaporation ponds. Mr. Harris noted that the Paradox Valley Unit has resumed injection at a reduced rate following the shut down due to a magnitude 2.9 earthquake that occurred near Paradox, Colorado on March 12, 2017.

Mr. Harris reported that the Forum’s Work Group met in Salt Lake City on April 19-20, with the focus on drafting the 2017 Triennial Review for program implementation. The draft review will be presented to the Forum at its June meeting in Wyoming. The updated Salinity Economic Impact Model (SEIM) will be included as a technical appendix.

Reclamation will be releasing a Funding Opportunity Announcement that provides funding for salinity control projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin associated with larger, basin-wide implementation of salinity control programs. Mr. Harris reported that the Board staff has submitted written testimonies to various House and Senate subcommittees in support of FY-2018 appropriations of nearly \$16 million for the USDA's NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program, \$10.3 million for Reclamation's Basinwide Program, and \$1.5 million through BLM's Soil, Water, and Air Program.

The Forum and Work Group will meet at Jackson Lake Lodge, Wyoming, from June 7-9. Mr. Harris noted that, starting on May 5th, the Department of Interior, EPA, and other federal departments have suspended activities related to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Advisory Council, operating under a charter that is signed by the USDA Secretary, DOI Secretary, and EPA Administrator, are in abeyance until September 2017. The activities of all of these federal advisory committees will be reviewed to see if they align with the Administration's priorities. Mr. Harris added that the two programs that may be affected are the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program and the Salinity Control Program's Advisory Council.

Glen Canyon Adaptive Management Program

As noted above, Mr. Harris reported that, by Secretarial order, all Federal Advisory Committees have been temporarily suspended, including the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program. The program was in the process of developing its triennial budget and work plan. The most recent iteration of the work plan, discussed at the April 20-21 Technical Work Group meeting, came in approximately \$3 million over budget. Mr. Harris noted that without the Adaptive Management Program groups and meetings, providing feedback on this process will be more challenging.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Mr. Harris reported that construction is currently underway at the newest conservation area of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP), the Mohave Valley Conservation Area. Located near Needles, California, the new habitat will be an approximately 50-acre backwater connected to the river, providing habitat for native fish and recreational opportunities. Reclamation's LCR MSCP staff are also working to develop a restoration plan for the recently acquired Planet Ranch property.

Mr. Harris noted that at the April 26 Steering Committee meeting, he stepped down as Chair of the Steering Committee, with Perri Benemelis of Arizona succeeding him as Chair and Jayne Harkins of Nevada elected as Vice-Chair. The LCR MSCP is also close to finalizing a proposal to add the Northern Mexican Gartersnake as a covered species under the program, which will be discussed by the group at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Mr. Harris noted that recent monitoring had detected 56 yellow-billed cuckoo territories and 46 nests, the majority of which were at the LCR MSCP's Palo Verde Ecological Reserve (PVER). A resident southwestern willow flycatcher was also detected at PVER, and Yuma clapper rails were detected at several sites.

Mr. Harris reported that the LCR MSCP Work Group was meeting on May 10-11 in San Diego to discuss the FY-18 budget and work plan, with the Steering Committee meeting on June 28 in Las Vegas.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Harris announced that the U.S. Senate confirmed Mr. Sonny Perdue as Secretary of the U.S Department of Agriculture. On May 4, President Trump signed the omnibus appropriations bill and averted a government shutdown through September. President Trump also nominated Mr. David Bernhardt to be the next Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. Harris announced that the Southern Nevada Water Authority will be hosting a Hydrology Symposium on May 22-23 in Las Vegas.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Fisher adjourned the meeting at 10:58 A.M.