

Minutes of Meeting  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  
Wednesday, February 12, 2020

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (Board) was held on Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at the Sheraton Ontario Airport Hotel, 429 North Vineyard Avenue, Ontario, California 91764.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

David DeJesus (MWD Alternate)  
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)  
James Hanks (IID)  
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)  
Henry Kuiper (Public Member)  
Jim Madaffer (SDCWA)

Peter Nelson, Chairman (CVWD)  
Glen D. Peterson (MWD)  
Jack Seiler (PVID Alternate)  
Mark Watton (SDCWA Alternate)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Evelyn Cortez-Davis (LADWP Alternate)  
Norma Sierra Galindo (IID Alternate)  
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)

David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)  
John Powell, Jr. (CVWD Alternate)  
David Vigil (DFW Alternate)

Others Present:

Steve Abbott  
Brian Alvarez  
Melissa Baum-Haley  
Christopher Harris  
Michael Hughes  
Ned Hyduke  
Sarai Jimenez  
Lisa Johansen  
Rich Juricich  
Tom Levy  
Kara Mathews  
Aaron Mead  
Dylan Mohamed

Anisa Patch  
Ivory Reyburn  
Kelly Rogers  
Shanti Rosset  
Tom Ryan  
Zach Stevens  
Gary Tavetian  
Jerry Zimmerman

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nelson announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

## **OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD**

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

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Chairman Nelson asked for a motion to approve the December 11, 2019, meeting minutes. Mr. Fisher moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Peterson. By roll-call vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairman Nelson asked for a motion to approve the Final Calendar-Year 2020 Board meeting schedule. Mr. Peterson moved that the Final Calendar-Year 2020 Board meeting schedule be approved, seconded by Mr. Kuiper. By roll-call vote, the Final Calendar-Year 2020 Board meeting schedule was unanimously approved.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORTS**

### **Colorado River Basin Report**

Mr. Harris reported that as of February 10<sup>th</sup>, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,604.67 feet with 12.20 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 50% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,095.09 feet with 11.30 MAF of storage, or 43% of capacity. Mr. Harris reported that the total system storage was 31.13 MAF, or 52% of capacity, which is about 4.3 MAF more than system storage at this same time last year.

Mr. Harris reported that the Water Year-2020 forecasted inflow to Lake Powell is 8.64 MAF, or 80% of normal and the Water Year-2020 forecasted April to July inflow to Lake Powell is 5.70 MAF, or 80% of normal. For Water Year-2020, the observed January inflow to Lake Powell was 0.28 MAF, or 77% of normal and the forecasted February inflow to Lake Powell is 0.34 MAF, or 87% of normal. Mr. Harris reported that the Water Year-2020 precipitation to date is 96% of normal and the current Basin snowpack is 117% of normal. Mr. Harris reported that precipitation conditions in the Basin were slightly above average in December, while conditions in January were below average throughout most of the basin.

Mr. Harris reported that as of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Upper Colorado River basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, ranged from 51% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 87% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 91% of capacity at Morrow Point and 67% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 67% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

Mr. Harris reported that as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, Brock and Senator Wash Reservoirs captured 15,864 AF and 7,702 AF, respectively. He also reported that the excess deliveries to Mexico through February 2<sup>nd</sup>, were 282 AF. As of January 31<sup>st</sup>, the total bypassed to the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico was 8,384 AF.

### **State and Local Report**

Ms. Jones, representing the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that the State is continuing its efforts to improve precipitation forecasting. She noted that one of the State's forecasting projects is an experimental forecast of sub-season timescales for California and the Colorado River Basin. She explained that the forecast timeframes are zero to two weeks, three to four weeks and five to six weeks. The project's current experimental forecast shows prolonged ridging in the northern part of California in the three to four-week time frame. She explained that although conventional weather models suggest dry conditions over the next few weeks, the experimental forecast did not signal prolonged ridging, indicating dryness. Ms. Jones reported that the experimental seasonal forecast for winter precipitation in California suggest dry conditions. Ms. Jones noted that the most recent drought monitor maps show dry conditions persisting in California. She added that two-thirds of the winter season is complete and California's winter precipitation will likely be below average.

Mr. Peterson, representing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that the Colorado River aqueduct has been shut down for maintenance and MWD has not been receiving water for a few weeks. Mr. Peterson also noted that the Bard Water District fallowing program has been renewed.

Mr. Harris, reporting for Board member Pettijohn of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), reported that the current precipitation condition in the Eastern Sierra is 69% of normal with 10.7 inches of water content, adding that conditions have leveled off significantly since the end of January.

## **STATUS OF COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS**

### **Status of the Salinity Control Program**

Mr. Juricich reported on the previous week's Salinity Work Group meeting in El Segundo, California. On the Paradox Valley Unit EIS, Mr. Juricich reported that the Forum is in support of the evaporation pond alternative, which the Forum feels has the most certainty. The Forum feels that a new injection well has a lot of uncertainty surrounding geology and its long-term operation. The other alternative of zero-liquid discharge technology requires a much higher cost. Reclamation provided an extension on the comments schedule, pushing the due date from February 4<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup>, giving the Forum enough time to finalize its comments. Mr. Juricich plans to send a draft California letter from the Board supporting the Forum's position and hopes to get California agencies to write similar letters supporting the evaporation pond alternative. The draft Final EIS is scheduled for release in April. The cooperating agencies will have a chance to review the draft Final EIS before the Final EIS is released in July. A ROD is expected by August.

Mr. Juricich reported that the Basin States have met a few times to discuss salinity control funding, which is cost-shared between Lower and Upper Basins. The Lower Basin's share comes from power revenues generated from the Lower Basin reservoirs (i.e. Hoover and Parker-Davis projects), whose low elevations over the last couple of decades have not generated the revenue needed to support the salinity control program desired levels. The states recognize that funding shortfall must be addressed, particularly to support a new salinity control project at Paradox, and will work over the next few years to identify and implement options to solve the issue. With a letter to Reclamation addressing this long-term funding issue, the states are more comfortable supporting a proposed Paradox salinity control alternative. Mr. Harris added that the other part of the funding issue has to do with Arizona not paying into the Lower Colorado Basin Development Fund. All their power revenues go towards Central Arizona Project repayment. This Basin States letter to Reclamation is to put everyone on notice to come up with some options to develop a long-term fix for the program whose funding may get folded into the legislation that may be needed for the next set of Interim Guidelines. Mr. Harris reported that the Upper Basin states are also willing to revisit the cost-share ratio between the two basins.

There Board discussed the cost-share ratio between the two basins, with some of the Board members asking about its role in regards to the imminent closure of the Paradox injection well. Mr. Harris explained that the Forum is working to determine the potential cost obligations associated with a new repayment obligation. This process may take a few years. The Board motioned for Chairman Nelson to sign the letter to Reclamation addressing the funding issue.

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

Mr. Harris reported that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program held its Annual Reporting meeting in conjunction with a Technical Work Group meeting January 12-14 in Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Harris noted that researchers have determined, through implementation of eleven high flow releases (HFEs) over the past several decades, that the flows appear to sufficiently maintain sandbars in the Grand Canyon. However, HFEs do not appear to have any biological impacts or progressively increase the size of sandbars.

Mr. Harris reported that the low, steady weekend flows known as “bug flows” conducted at Glen Canyon Dam in summer 2018 and 2019 have yielded inconclusive results. Researchers suggested conducting the flows for a third year to better understand how they impact the ecosystem. Mr. Harris noted that, under the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP), 2020 is the first opportunity to conduct a spring HFE. However, sediment conditions were currently insufficient to support one. Mr. Harris also reported that the number of nonnative brown trout below Glen Canyon Dam has increased significantly in the last several years, although downstream populations of native fish appear to be stable or slightly increasing.

Finally, Mr. Harris noted that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program was currently meeting in Phoenix, Arizona and starting discussions on the next triennial budget and work plan for FY21-23.

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

Mr. Harris reported that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) will be conducting a tour on March 24-26 to celebrate the 15-year anniversary of the Program. The tour will begin on the morning of March 24<sup>th</sup> in Yuma, Arizona and travel north along the river, stopping at LCR MSCP conservation areas and other sites before ending near Las Vegas on the afternoon of March 26<sup>th</sup>.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### *Proposed Downlisting of the Humpback Chub*

Mr. Harris reported that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had recently proposed to reclassify the humpback chub from endangered to threatened. There are six core populations across the Colorado River Basin, the largest of which is found in the Grand Canyon in the Lower Basin. Mr. Harris noted that recovery efforts in the both Basins have helped to stabilize the species, and the USFWS is also considering proposing to downlist the razorback sucker from endangered to threatened.

### *Lake Powell Pipeline*

Mr. Harris reported on the Lake Powell Pipeline proposed by the Utah Division of Water Resources. Mr. Harris noted that Board staff had submitted a scoping comments letter to Reclamation on January 10, 2020.

### **Washington, D.C. Updates**

Mr. Harris reported that the President's FY-2021 budget was released on February 10<sup>th</sup> with \$1.13B for Reclamation. Mr. Harris also reported that the House unveiled a \$760B infrastructure proposal with most funding going to transportation, but \$50.5B set aside for wastewater treatment, and \$25B for drinking water.

Mr. Harris reported that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized its update to the Water of the United States Clean Water Act Rule that will reduce protections for streams and wetlands.

### **Next Scheduled Board Meeting**

Finally, Mr. Harris noted that the next meeting of the Colorado River Board would be March 11<sup>th</sup> and would be held in El Centro, California, at the Imperial Irrigation District (IID).

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Nelson adjourned the meeting at 10:52 a.m.