

Minutes of Meeting  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  
Wednesday, March 11, 2020

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (Board) was held on Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at the Imperial Irrigation District, 1285 Broadway Avenue, El Centro, CA 92243.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

David DeJesus (MWD Alternate)  
James Hanks (IID)  
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)  
Henry Kuiper (Public Member)

Jim Madaffer (SDCWA)  
Peter Nelson, Chairman (CVWD)  
Glen D. Peterson (MWD)  
David Vigil (DFW Alternate)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Evelyn Cortez-Davis (LADWP Alternate)  
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)  
Norma Sierra Galindo (IID Alternate)  
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)

David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)  
John Powell, Jr. (CVWD Alternate)  
Jack Seiler (PVID Alternate)  
Mark Watton (SDCWA Alternate)

Others Present:

James Abatti  
Jose Ayon  
Nick Bahr  
Vince Brooke  
Tom Brundy  
Katie Burnworth  
Matt Dessert  
Gina Dockstader  
Mitchell Edgmon  
Craig Elmore  
Armando Galicia  
Brent Grizzle  
Kevin Grizzle  
JB Hamby  
Christopher Harris  
John Hernandez  
Miguel Hernandez

Joanna Smith Hoff  
Jessica Humes  
Sarai Jimenez  
Lisa Johansen  
Rich Juricich  
Carson Kalin  
Kathryn Lamb  
Ron Leimgruber  
Kirk Lyster  
Henry Martinez  
Kara Mathews  
Kathryn McCutcheon  
Aaron Mead  
Brea Mohamed  
Dylan Mohamed  
Edward Morales  
Jessica Neuwerth

Luis Olmedo  
Mike Pacheco  
Paula Pangle  
Josie Pizano  
Kay Pricola  
Jesse Puga  
Gil Rebollar  
Ivory Reyburn  
Eric Reyes  
David Schoneman  
Tina Shields

Ed Smith  
Gary Tavetian  
Quentin Tucker  
Cherrie Watte  
Jerry Zimmerman

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nelson announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.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. Mr. Ronnie Leimgruber from the Imperial Valley Farm Bureau brought up several concerns. Mr. Leimgruber expressed his concerns for the Salton Sea and interest in compensation for water conservation and additional storage for conserved water.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Chairman Nelson asked for a motion to approve the February 12, 2020, meeting minutes. Mr. Madaffer moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Peterson. By roll-call vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORTS**

### **Colorado River Basin Report**

Mr. Harris reported that as of March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,602.69 feet with 12 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 49% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,096.38 with 11.41 of storage, or 44% of capacity. Mr. Harris reported that the total system storage was 31 MAF, or 52% of capacity, which is about 4.29 MAF more than system storage at this time last year.

Mr. Harris reported that as of February 18<sup>th</sup>, the Water Year-2020 forecasted inflow to Lake Powell is 8.56 MAF, or 79% of normal and the Water Year-2020 forecasted April to July inflow to Lake Powell is 5.70, 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 0.31 MAF, or 79% of normal. The current Basin snowpack is 106% and precipitation to date is 90%. Mr. Harris reported the precipitation conditions in January and February were very dry, with exception of the Upper Green River basin with slightly above average conditions.

Mr. Harris reported that as of March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Upper Colorado River basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, ranged from 42% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 86% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 92% of capacity at Morrow Point

and 65% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 76% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

Mr. Harris reported that as of March 5<sup>th</sup>, Brock and Senator Wash Reservoirs captured 29,572 AF and 13,450 AF, respectively. He also reported that the excess deliveries to Mexico through February 29<sup>th</sup>, were 7,119 AF. As of January 31st, the total bypassed to the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico was 16,755 AF.

### **State and Local Report**

Ms. Jones, representing the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that precipitation conditions in northern California have set records for no measurable precipitation for February, which is usually one of the three wettest months on an average basis.

Ms. Jones reported on an experimental modeling project that NOAA is preparing for DWR on atmospheric ridging. She explained that ridging tends to prevent storms from reaching California and is a predictor of dry conditions. Ms. Jones reported that the model has shown the best predictive skill in California and the Colorado River Basin. Ms. Jones reported that the model has also forecasted very dry conditions for Water-Year 2020 in California. She noted, however, that last year's wet precipitation conditions and carry-over storage will be essential for the dry water year ahead. She noted that the more funding is needed to continue and advance forecasting research.

Mr. Peterson, representing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that MWD has a record amount of nearly 3 MAF of water stored, which includes storage in Lake Mead, system reservoirs and various storage projects in the Central Valley and Coachella.

Mr. Harris, reporting for Board member Pettijohn of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), reported that as of March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Eastern Sierra precipitation is 56% of normal.

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

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

Mr. Harris reported that the Board as well as many other California and Colorado River agencies submitted comments on the draft Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) EIS. Reclamation is developing a range of alternatives and potentially identifying a preferred alternative to continue operating PVU to prevent about one hundred thousand tons of salt per year from entering the Dolores River and then ultimately the mainstream. With declining reservoir levels reducing the

generation of hydropower, the revenues going into both the Upper and Lower Basin Development Funds have been declining over time. Mr. Harris explained that there is a need to implement a long-term funding fix while continuing to control salt at PVU. The Basin States submitted a letter to Reclamation in support of this effort.

Mr. Harris further explained that there is some consensus around evaporation ponds as the preferred alternative for the PVU. The Basin States are also suggesting continuation of the current deep injection well while evaluating other opportunities for controlling the hundred thousand tons of salt. The final EIS is scheduled to come out in April for cooperating agencies' review, with a final EIS in July and a Record of Decision in August. Mr. Harris reported that the Basin States and Reclamation still intend on doing their best efforts to control salt at the PVU, a point-source for salinity control.

### **Status of the Weather Modification Program**

Mr. Juricich reported that as of February, the state of Wyoming has accomplished 700 hours of cloud seeding, 4,000 hours in Utah, and around 4,000 to 5,000 hours in Colorado. A recent news article enclosed in the Board packet reported that some researchers were looking at strong evidence of the benefits of cloud seeding. Mr. Juricich explained that the researchers were able to find in the snowfall isotopic tracers placed in some of the silver iodide seeding material. Board members inquired about the contributions the Lower Basin States make to the program. Mr. Juricich responded that the states keep good records of their spending and have individual contracts that are within what the Six Agency Committee commits each year to the effort.

### **Minute No. 323 Implementation**

Mr. Harris reported that the Environmental Work Group (EWG) for Minute No. 323 met February 26<sup>th</sup> in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Mr. Harris reported that approximately 22,000 acre-feet of water has so far been secured for environmental purposes under the Minute. Currently, no federal water has yet been made available for use under the Minute, although efforts are underway to make federal water available for use by the EWG within the next several years.

Mr. Harris noted that members of the EWG had been working to monitor the impacts of the recent disruption in water flow to the Cienega de Santa Clara, a large wetland complex in the Delta. The Cienega is sustained by saline drainage delivered from the Yuma area by the Main Outlet Drain Extension (MODE), which underwent repair work from September 2019 to January 2020. During this time, no surface water was delivered to the Cienega, and scientists reported a reduction in the extent of open water and a significant increase in salinity levels. Mr. Harris reported that scientists will continue to monitor the site as flows return.

In response to a question from Chairman Nelson, Mr. Harris noted that during the four months of repair work, water was rerouted to the main channel, resulting in surface flows that at times extended from the Northerly International Boundary past the Southerly International Boundary.

### **Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program**

Board Staff Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program met February 12-13 in Phoenix, Arizona. Ms. Neuwerth reported that the group received an update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the proposed downlisting of the endangered humpback chub. The proposal to reclassify the fish from endangered to threatened was released in January 2020, including slightly relaxed protections for the species which could allow for greater management flexibility. Ms. Neuwerth noted that the USFWS is also moving forward with a downlisting proposal for the endangered razorback sucker, which is actively stocked in both the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the AMWG discussed several experimental releases from Glen Canyon Dam that could be conducted in 2020, including a spring high flow experiment (HFE) and low, steady weekend flows during summer months known as “bug flows.” Conditions did not support implementation of a spring HFE, but the group was considering recommending implementation of “bug flows,” which were also conducted in summer 2018 and summer 2019.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that funding for the program has been in flux in recent years, with a recent switch from Upper Colorado River Storage Project power revenues to Congressional appropriations. The program’s funding source in FY-2021 and out is still uncertain.

Finally, Ms. Neuwerth noted that the Technical Work Group for the program would meet April 15-16 in Phoenix.

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

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) Financial Work Group met via teleconference on February 20<sup>th</sup>. The LCR MSCP budget for FY-2019 was approximately \$38 million, including approximately \$10 million to secure an easement for a new conservation area in the Palo Verde Valley. Ms. Neuwerth reported that actual spending in FY-2019 was below budget due to delays in construction costs. The program budget for FY-2020 is \$33.2 million and the budget for FY-2021 is \$30.3 million.

Finally, Ms. Neuwerth reported that the LCR MSCP Work Group would be meeting in Yuma, Arizona on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, followed by the Program's 15-Year Anniversary tour from March 25-26.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### *Appreciation of Mr. Mark Watton*

Mr. Harris reported that the Colorado River Board's San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) Alternate Board member, Mr. Mark Watton, will be retiring from Otay Water District. Mr. Harris noted that Mr. Watton has served the water industry for 37 years; and that Mr. Watton has served two tours of service on the Colorado River Board of California representing the San Diego County Water Authority.

Mr. Madaffer, representing SDCWA, expressed his appreciation for Mr. Watton's service on the SDCWA and Colorado River Board and noted that Mr. Watton would be continuing as the SDCWA's Alternate Board member. Mr. Madaffer also noted SDCWA's close partnership with IID and his interest in reaching agreement on storage opportunities for the SDCWA in Lake Mead.

### *Salton Sea Management Program*

Mr. Harris reported that the California Natural Resources Agency released the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) 2020 Annual Report on February 24, 2020. Mr. Harris also stated that the State Water Resources Control Board will hold a SSMP public workshop at the Imperial Irrigation District's Board Room in El Centro, California, on March 18, 2020.

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

Mr. Harris reported that the 2020 President's budget had been released and included \$200 million dollars to be shared between DOI and Reclamation for "science to sustain and enhance ground and surface water quality and quantity." The Presidential budget also included \$1.1 billion dollars for the Bureau of Reclamation to operate, maintain and rehabilitate existing water resources infrastructure in the western U.S.

Mr. Harris reported that the Government Accountability Office Report on Water Infrastructure and Climate Change issued a report telling Congress to consider requiring recipients of federal water infrastructure funding to account for climate change.

Mr. Harris reported on the Bureau of Reclamation's finalized permanent water delivery contracts with 75 cities and farm districts in California to receive water from the federal Central Valley Project (CVP).

Mr. Harris reported that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had recently released the National Water Reuse Action Plan. The plan is intended to boost the country's use of grey water and, if fully implemented, could enable recycling up to 80% of all used water within 50 years.

### **Next Scheduled Board Meeting**

Finally, Mr. Harris noted that the next meeting of the Colorado River Board would be April 15<sup>th</sup> and would be held at the Sheraton Ontario Airport Hotel, in Ontario, California.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Nelson adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.