

Minutes of Meeting
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, May 13, 2020

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (Board) was held virtually on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, using the Zoom Webinar meeting platform.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

David DeJesus (MWD Alternate)	Peter Nelson, Chairman (CVWD)
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)	Glen D. Peterson (MWD)
James Hanks (IID)	John Powell, Jr. (CVWD Alternate)
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)	Jack Seiler (PVID Alternate)
Henry Kuiper (Public Member)	David Vigil (DFW Alternate)
Jim Madaffer (SDCWA)	Mark Watton (SDCWA Alternate)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

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

Others Present:

Steven Abbott	Henry Martinez
Brian Alvarez	Kara Mathews
Justina Gamboa Arce	Aaron Mead
Jim Barrett	Dylan Mohamed
Robert Cheng	Jessica Neuwerth
JR Echard	Vic Nguyen
JB Hamby	Angela Rashid
Christopher Harris	Kelly Rodgers
Bill Hasencamp	Alex Rodriguez
Joanna Smith Hoff	Shanti Rosset
Michael Hughes	Tom Ryan
Sarai Jimenez	Roberta Saligumba
Lisa Johansen	Tina Shields
Lori Jones	Gary Tavetian
Rich Juricich	Margaret Vick
Eric Katz	Jay Weiner
Tom Levy	Jerry Zimmerman
Lindia Liu	

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nelson announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:05 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 March 11, 2020, meeting minutes. Mr. Fisher 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. Juricich reported that as of May 11th, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,600.61 feet with 11.81 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 49% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,094.82 with 11.28 of storage, or 43% of capacity. Mr. Juricich reported that the total system storage was 30.75 MAF, or 52% of capacity, which is about 3 MAF more than system storage at this time last year.

Mr. Juricich reported that as of May 4th, the Water Year-2020 forecasted inflow to Lake Powell is 7.40 MAF, or 68% of normal and the Water Year-2020 forecasted April to July inflow to Lake Powell is 4.65, or 65% of normal. For Water Year-2020, the observed April inflow to Lake Powell was 0.48 MAF, or 45% of normal and the forecasted May inflow to Lake Powell is 1.85 MAF, or 79% of normal. The current Basin snowpack is 68% and precipitation to date is 84%.

Mr. Juricich reported that precipitation conditions in March were above average in the Lower Basin, while precipitation conditions in the Upper Basin ranged from below normal to slightly above normal. In April, most of the Basin experienced below average precipitation conditions. Mr. Juricich explained that as of May 4th, most of the that Upper Basin snow conditions

were much below normal, with exception to the Upper Green, Yampa and Upper Colorado river basins, which have slightly below to normal snow conditions.

Mr. Juricich reported that as of May 2nd, the Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs captured 58,582 AF and 27,483 AF, respectively. He also reported that the excess deliveries to Mexico through May 3rd, were 48,520 AF. As of May 4th, the total amount of saline drainage water bypassed to the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico was 46,568 AF.

State and Local Report

Ms. Jones, representing the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that precipitation conditions in Northern California are below average, while conditions in Southern California are above average. Ms. Jones reported that at the beginning of Water Year-2020, precipitation conditions were good, particularly in November, due to good storm activity which put California ahead of the curve going into the wet season. However, conditions began to turn dry in at the end of January and some areas in Northern California experienced no measurable precipitation for February, noting that precipitation conditions did not improve until March. Ms. Jones further explained that Southern California benefitted from a few significant storms that never tracked to north, resulting in better precipitation conditions in Southern California. She stated due to the precipitation conditions, the State Water Project allocation remains at 15%. The Central Valley Project's agricultural contractors in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys also have an allocation of 15%, adding that the contractors have requested between 55% to 75%. Ms. Jones reported that the Klamath Project, on the California-Oregon border is in its 2nd driest year on record in terms of water availability, second only to the drought crisis in 2001. She added that because this dry year is following the wet Water Year-2019, California's reservoir storage is in good shape and will help the water users get through the dry conditions in Northern California.

Mr. Peterson, representing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that the Bard Water District seasonal fallowing program agreement has been signed by both agencies and is now in effect. Chairman Nelson inquired about how MWD's demand has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home order. Mr. Peterson stated that water demand has fluctuated, and now it is slightly down. He noted that MWD will be received a 15% allocation from the State Water Project and will be accessing some of its water supplies from storage programs in the Central Valley. He added that MWD is projecting about 1.6 MAF of sales, which is a decline from previous months. Mr. Peterson added that local water treatment districts are seeing increases in the volumes of wastewater treated on a daily basis due to the stay-at-home orders rather than using the services in other districts, where many residents work and shop during normal conditions.

Mr. Harris, reporting for Board member Pettijohn of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), reported that the precipitation conditions in the Eastern Sierra were below average at 38% of April 1st normal.

STATUS OF COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS

Seven Basin States Letter to Secretary Bernhardt Regarding the 7.D. Review Process

Mr. Harris reported that the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) had initiated a review of effectiveness of the 2007 Interim Guidelines, as required by Section XI.G.7.D. of the Guidelines and as directed by Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt at the Colorado River Water Users Association conference in December 2019. Mr. Harris reported that Reclamation had hosted several public webinars to describe the proposed scope and process of the 7.D. Review. Mr. Harris reported that the seven Basin States had developed a proposed letter to submit to the Secretary regarding the 7.D. Review process, which was included in the Board packet. Mr. Harris noted that the letter advocates for inclusion of all Basin stakeholders in the review process, urges a thorough and careful review of the effectiveness of the operational aspects of the Guidelines, and recognition of the efforts undertaken subsequent to the Guidelines, such as the Drought Contingency Plans and implementation of Minutes Nos. 319 and 323. In response to a question from Chairman Nelson about the development of the letter, Mr. Harris noted that the letter had been drafted by Arizona, then modified by a small group of representatives from all of the Basin States, including several from California. Mr. Fisher noted that a seven Basin States letter is important to demonstrate state unity going into the Guidelines review process.

Mr. Harris asked for the Board to approve the letter and authorize Chairman Nelson to sign on behalf of California. Mr. Madaffer moved for approval, seconded by Mr. Fisher, and by unanimous roll-call vote, the motion was approved.

Status of Minute No. 323 Implementation

Mr. Harris reported that the Environmental Work Group met via webinar on May 7th. The group discussed the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the creation, maintenance, and monitoring of habitat in the Colorado River Delta and will meet again via webinar on June 9th. Mr. Harris reported that the Desalination Work Group met via webinar on April 29th. The group received an update on a draft report regarding potential desalination opportunities along the Sonoran coast of the Gulf of California. Mr. Harris reported that the Minute Oversight Group expected a presentation on the final study report and key findings at their June meeting.

Status of the Salinity Control Program

Mr. Juricich updated the Board on the status of different activities of the Salinity Control Program. The Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) EIS is currently under confidential review by the cooperating agencies before the draft of the Final EIS becomes available for public review. The cooperating agencies are requesting Reclamation for an extension of the review period. If the

review period stays the same, the final EIS would be published for public review in July and the Record of Decision would come out in August.

Mr. Juricich reported that the federal agencies provided updates on different research and program funding activities during the Work Group meetings in April via webinar. The Work Group also spent time walking through the 2020 Triennial Review on salinity standards. This review report comes out every three years and is sent to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency after the seven states approval.

Mr. Juricich reported that Reclamation has been conducting an in-depth seismic analysis on the earthquake that occurred near the PVU in March 2019 to evaluate the risk of restarting the injection well. The analysis led to the reinitiated injection of that well under a trial basis on April 21st. The trial is a six-month test to monitor seismic activity and well head pressure to see if there is any cause of concern. Under this six-month test, the injection rate will be at a 32-percent reduction from prior to the March earthquake, equivalent to about 65,000 tons of salt reduction per year on the Dolores River. In response to a question, Mr. Juricich responded that the PVU EIS has evaluated concentrating the brine before disposal but it is not discussed outside of the EIS. Mr. Harris agrees that the Salinity Work Group should look into the feasibility of concentrating the brine before disposal. Chairman Nelson inquired about the effects of the reduced salt disposal rate on the Lower Basin, specifically whether salinity increases in the January to December timeframe in the Coachella Canal is due in part to the PVU not being operational. Mr. Juricich responded that without PVU there could be up to about a 9 milligram per liter increase in salinity downstream near Imperial Dam.

Mr. Harris reported that the Board's technical staff has been looking into the salinity increase seen in both the All-American and Coachella Canals in the winter timeframe over the past five to seven years. The data did not reveal any evidence of increased salinity in the outflow from the Colorado River Indian Tribe's Main Outfall Drain or the Palo Verde Main Outfall Drain. Water quality and weather station data seems to indicate that the observed salinity increases tend to occur in the Lower Colorado River below the Taylor Ferry gaging station at the southern end of the Palo Verde Valley, just upstream of the beginning of the Cibola Division. Reclamation is leaning towards the explanation that during the winter timeframe when water orders are down and the releases out of Hoover Dam are greatly reduced, bank discharge of local groundwater, and/or local precipitation events are picking up salt from the local geology and washing it into the river. Mr. Harris continued that Board staff is actively looking into this occurrence and may ultimately involve both Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey to assist in fully understanding the causes and potential options for mitigation.

Mr. Juricich provided a presentation on the Intrepid Potash, a mining company based in Moab, Utah, that harvests salt products via evaporation ponds since the 1970's. The main product developed is potash, which is used as an agricultural fertilizer, as well as road salts. The company

has expressed an interest in potentially partnering with Reclamation on the PVU operations and potentially recovering some the salt products for commercial resale. The Forum and the Basin States are very interested in following up on this opportunity.

Status of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Board Staff Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Technical Work Group (TWG) for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program met via webinar on April 15-16. The TWG spent most of the meeting discussing the details of the FY21-23 Triennial Budget and Work Plan, which is currently under development. Ms. Neuwerth reported that the proposed budget and work plan will be finalized by the TWG at its June meeting and then reviewed and approved by the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) at its August meeting.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that Macroinvertebrate Production Flows, or “bug flow” releases are currently occurring at Glen Canyon Dam. These low, steady weekend flows are meant to improve insect production in the Grand Canyon, for the benefit of the aquatic food chain and native fish. Ms. Neuwerth noted that bug flows were also conducted in summer 2018 and 2019, with mixed results. Although the coronavirus pandemic will have some impact on monitoring work in the Grand Canyon, Ms. Neuwerth reported that researchers are confident that the delay in sampling will not prevent them from determining the effects of this year’s experimental dam releases.

Status of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Steering Committee for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) met via webinar on April 22nd, during which the group approved four minor modifications to the Program. Ms. Neuwerth noted that these changes were the result of experience gained through research and implementation of the Program over the last fifteen years.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Work Group for the LCR MSCP met via webinar on May 4-5 to discuss the *Draft implementation Report, FY21 Work Plan and Budget, FY19 Accomplishment Report*. This report looks at a three-year period, including FY19 accomplishments and activities planned for FY21. Ms. Neuwerth reported that habitat acquisition and construction is ahead of schedule, with more than 6,400 acres of the Program’s required 8,132 acres already in the ground and the remaining conservation areas identified. Ms. Neuwerth reported that LCR MSCP conservation areas are proving popular for many of the Program’s covered species, especially the yellow-billed cuckoo, although the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher remains elusive.

In response to a question from Mr. Peterson, Ms. Neuwerth noted that the Program's 15-Year Anniversary Tour, originally scheduled for March, was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Water SMART Funding Opportunity

Mr. Juricich reported that Reclamation has released a funding opportunity announcement for communities to take a proactive approach to drought through building projects that increase water supply reliability, improve water management, or provide benefits for fish, wildlife and the environment. Mr. Juricich also noted that eligible applicants for funding include states, tribes, irrigation districts, water districts or other organizations with water or power delivery authority located in the western United States or U.S. territories. Lastly, Mr. Juricich stated that funding is available based on the following timeframes: (1) Up to \$300,000 per agreement is available for a project that can be completed within two years, and (2) Up to \$750,000 per agreement is available for a project that can be completed within three years.

Colorado River Basin Climate and Hydrology State of the Science

Mr. Juricich reported on the Colorado River Basin Climate and Hydrology State of the Science report. Mr. Juricich stated that the report provides a comprehensive assessment of current and future trends in climate and hydrology within the Basin.

Washington, D.C. Updates

Mr. Juricich reported that the Senate Environmental & Public Works (EPW) Committee is considering the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 (AWIA) and Drinking Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 (DWIA). Mr. Juricich also reported that both bills have been approved by the EPW Committee and sent out to the full Senate for consideration.

Mr. Juricich reported that The House Transportation and Instructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) plans to release his water infrastructure bill later this month.

Next Scheduled Board Meeting

Finally, Mr. Harris noted that the next meeting of the Colorado River Board would be held on June 10th and would also be held virtually using the Zoom Webinar meeting platform.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Nelson adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.