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

September 9, 2020

ADMINISTRATION

Meeting Minutes, August 12, 2020

The draft minutes for the August 12, 2020, meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB) have been prepared and were included in the Board meeting packet of materials and are proposed to be adopted at the September 9th, Board meeting.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT

As of August 31st, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,599.93 feet with 11.74 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 48% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,084.02 feet with 10.35 MAF of storage, or 40% of capacity. As of August 30th, the total system storage was 29.72 MAF, or 50% of capacity, which is about 2.57 MAF less than system storage at this same time last year.

As of September 1st, the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, ranged from 85% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 86% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 96% of capacity at Morrow Point, and 59% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 71% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of August 17th, the mid-month forecast for the unregulated inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year (WY) 2020 is 6.18 MAF (57% of normal). The preliminary observed April through July 2020 runoff into Lake Powell for Water Year-2020 was 3.76 MAF (52% of normal). For WY-2020, the July observed Lake Powell inflow was 0.29 MAF (27% of normal), and the August Lake Powell inflow forecast is 0.1 MAF (19% of normal). With less than a month left in WY-2020, the overall Upper Colorado River Basin Water Year precipitation is about 80% of normal. While the winter precipitation and snowpack was generally close to the annual average, the drier than normal soil conditions across much of the Basin, and below average precipitation and accelerated runoff conditions during the Spring led to an overall reduction in Water Year precipitation.

2021 Colorado River System Annual Operating Plan, Final Consultation

Board and CRB member agency staff participated in the final consultation meeting for the development of the 2021 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for Colorado River Reservoirs hosted by Reclamation and held via webinar on September 3, 2020, to provide an overview of the draft

2021 AOP and accept comments from stakeholders. Section 602(b) of the 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act (P.L. 90-537) requires that the Secretary of the Department of the Interior prepare a report documenting the actual operations for the previous water year and projected operations for the upcoming water year. Based upon the conjunctive reservoir operating criteria established within the 2007 Interim Guidelines, the August 24-Month Study Report projections for January 1st elevations in the following year are utilized in determining the operational tiers for the coordinated operations of Lakes Powell and Mead. The final 2021 Annual Operating Plan for Colorado River Reservoirs can be accessed and viewed online at: https://www.usbr.gov/uc/water/rsvrs/ops/aop/AOP21_draft.pdf.

August 24-Month Study Report

Reclamation held a webinar to roll-out the results of the most probable August 2020 24-Month Study on Friday, August 14th. Pursuant to the 2007 Interim Guidelines, the August 2020 24-Month Study projections of the January 1, 2021, system storage and reservoir water surface elevations are utilized in determining the operational tiers for the coordinated operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead during 2021. The August 24-Month Study also sets operational targets for Lake Mead operations pursuant to the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) Agreement.

Based upon on the results of the August 2020 24-Month Study Report Study and the most probable inflow scenario, the projected operational tier for Water-Year 2021 for Lake Powell is the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier. Based upon the most probable inflow scenario and tier determination, the annual release from Glen Canyon Dam will start at 8.23 MAF, and with a projected April 2021 adjustment, the most probable annual release from Glen Canyon Dam in WY-2021 is projected to be 9.0 MAF.

With respect to Lake Mead and Hoover Dam operations, it was determined that the most probable operational tier for Lake Mead is the Normal or ICS Surplus Condition with Lower Basin DCP and Minute No. 323 Water Scarcity Contingency Plan savings contributions. Figures 1 and 2, below, show the projected water elevation through WY-2022 for Lake Powell and Lake Mead based on the minimum probable, most probable, and the maximum probable Colorado Basin River Forecast Center unregulated inflow forecasts utilized in the August 2020 24-Month Study Report.

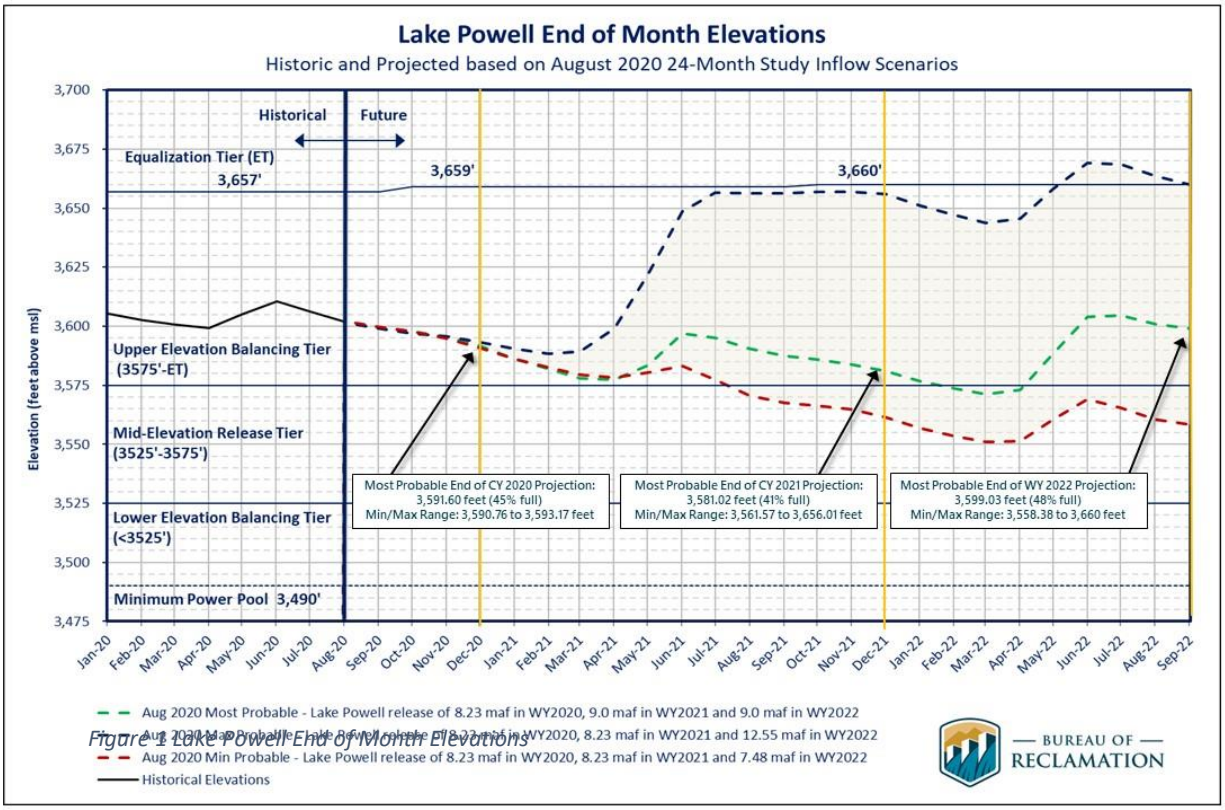
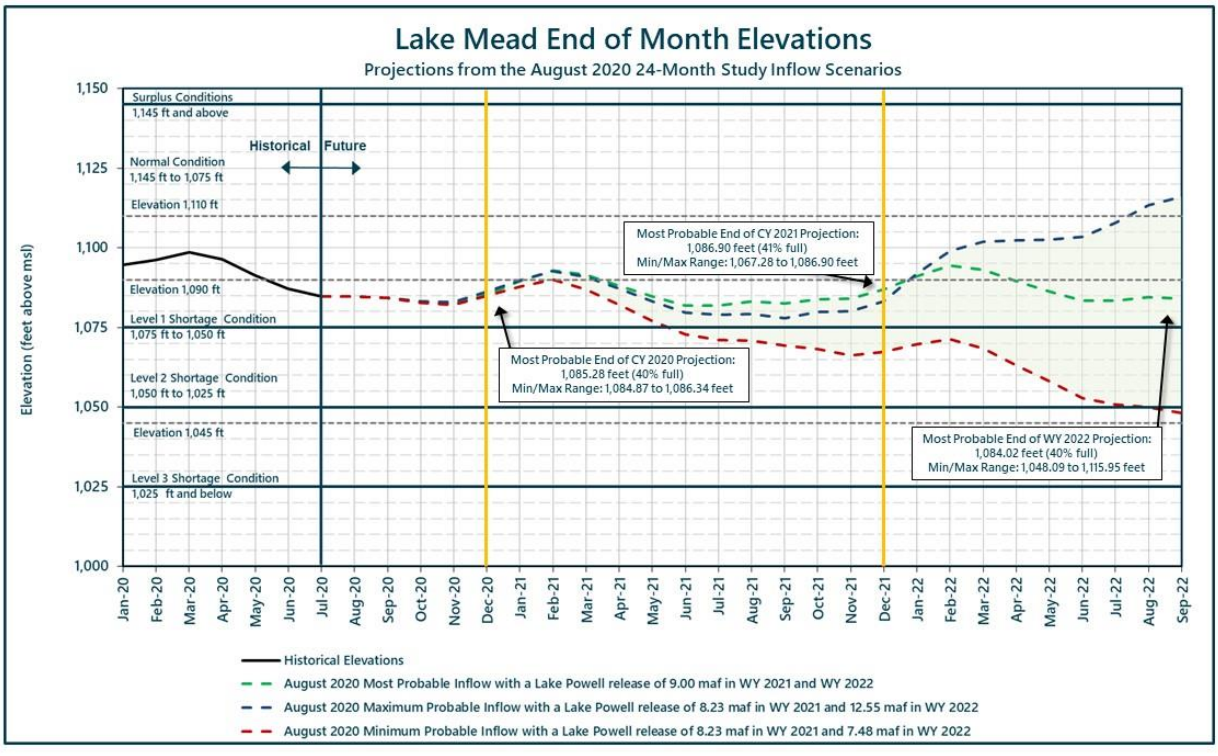


Figure 1 Lake Powell End of Month Elevations



COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

Status of the Paradox Valley Environmental Impact Statement

The Paradox Valley Salinity Control Unit (PVU) is one of the original salinity control projects authorized under Title II of the 1974 Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (P.L. 93-320, as amended). The PVU is comprised of a series of brine collection wells and a deep injection disposal well that has prevented approximately 100,000 tons of salt each year from entering the waters of the Colorado River until its closure in March 2019 due to seismic activity. Reclamation identified four PVU replacement alternatives in the Draft EIS released on December 6, 2019, including: A) No Action, B) New Injection Well, C) Evaporation Ponds, and D) Zero Liquid Discharge at locations shown in Figure 3.

Reclamation released the Administrative Draft of the Final EIS on April 17, 2020, for a 30-day review by the cooperating agencies. At the request of the Basin States cooperating agencies, Reclamation granted additional comment extensions to June 22, 2020. As one of the cooperating agencies for California, the Board has coordinated the preparation of consensus-based comments with cooperating agencies from the other six basin states. The Final EIS was scheduled for release on August 28, 2020. However, Reclamation has not yet released the FEIS.

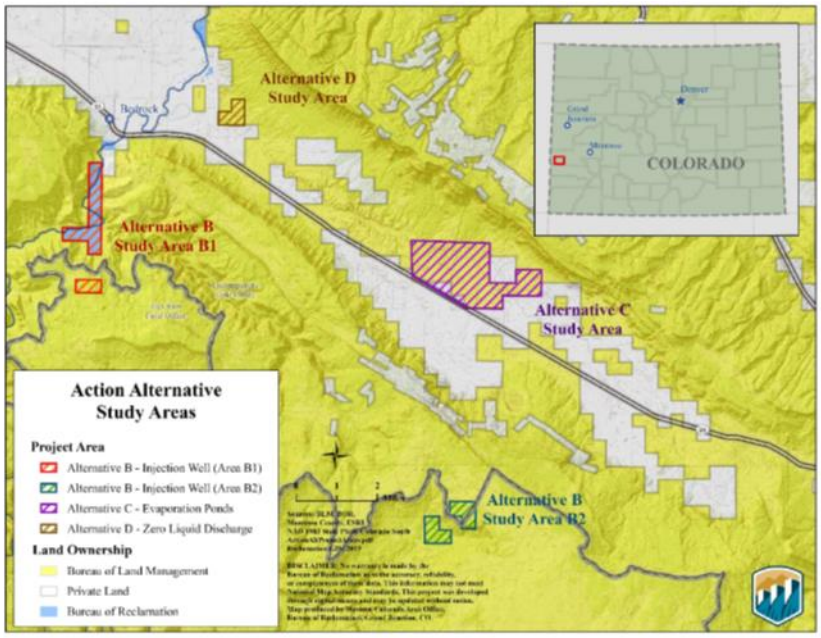


Figure 1. PVU Alternative Locations

Status of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

The Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) met via webinar on August 19-20. The group discussed the Triennial Work Plan and Budget for Fiscal-Years (FY) 2021 through 2023, which directs approximately $11 million in funding per year for program management, tribal projects, and research and monitoring efforts below Glen Canyon Dam.

The FY 2021-2023 work plan includes ongoing monitoring for native fish, sediment, cultural and tribal resources, nonnative fish, and aquatic insects. The AMWG discussed a proposal to provide funding in support of a National Park Service incentivized harvest project which will pay anglers to remove nonnative brown trout from the Lees Ferry area, but ultimately decided that the funding was not immediately needed. The group also discussed funding to support an experimental spring high flow dam release and directed the Technical Work Group (TWG) to discuss the issue at its October meeting and return to the AMWG with a recommendation. With this modification, the AMWG recommended approval of the triennial work plan and budget.

The source of GCDAMP funding for FY-2021 is still undetermined, although the Energy and Water funding bill recently passed by the House of Representatives includes $21.4 million in hydropower revenues to support the GCDAMP as well as activities pursuant to the Upper Basin native fish recovery programs. The Senate has not yet taken up this budget measure.

The AMWG also discussed several experimental releases at Glen Canyon Dam. “Bug flows,” or low steady weekend flows intended to increase the aquatic food base, were conducted this summer season from May 1st to August 31st. Scientists were able to collect a robust dataset of information despite the challenges posed by the COVID19 pandemic and will provide the AMWG with the results of the summer experimental releases within the coming months. The AMWG also received an update on the amount of sediment that had been brought into the Grand Canyon by tributaries. Due to limited monsoon activity so far this fall, sediment input is currently far below those levels needed to trigger a fall high flow experiment (HFE) release from Glen Canyon Dam.

The AMWG also discussed a “spring disturbance flow” that may occur in March 2021. This proposed dam release is not one of the experimental releases identified in the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) EIS and Record of Decision but would work within the operational flexibility available under the LTEMP. The proposed spring disturbance flow would build off of significant reductions in dam releases required for maintenance that scheduled for March 2021.Reclamation plans to conduct repairs to the concrete apron below Glen Canyon Dam, which would require reducing releases from Glen Canyon Dam to 4,000 cfs (or half of the normal minimum release) for approximately five days. The proposed spring disturbance flow would follow this low flow with several days at the highest release within power plant capacity (approximately 25,000 cfs), in order to learn about the system’s response to spring flow disturbances. Although spring HFEs are possible under the LTEMP, the conditions

needed to trigger one have not yet been met, and the "spring disturbance flow" is a similar but smaller-scale spring high flow. The potential spring flow will be discussed in further detail at future meetings of the TWG, AMWG, and various *ad hoc* working groups. Finally, the TWG is planning to meet on October 14-15 via webinar.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Lake Powell Pipeline Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement

As has been discussed at previous Board meetings, on June 8, 2020, Reclamation released the Notice of Availability of the draft Environmental Impact Statement/draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (DEIS) for the Lake Powell Pipeline Project (LPP). Reclamation is seeking public comment on the DEIS during a 90-day public review and comment period that will close at 11:59 pm MDT on September 8, 2020. Board staff previously submitted preliminary scoping comments on January 10, 2020, in a letter to Reclamation for the LPP project proposed by the Utah Board of Water Resources (UBWR).

The proposed LPP project has been an idea proposed by the State of Utah for nearly twenty years; and the current plans for the proposed project include a 140-mile, 69-inch-diameter water delivery pipeline that would withdraw water supplies from the storage pool at Lake Powell, located in the Upper Basin of the Colorado River System, and would terminate at the Sand Hollow Reservoir near St. George, Utah, located in the Lower Basin of the Colorado River System. The proposed LPP Project would begin conveying water supplies in 2028, and would be fully built out by 2049 and capable of conveying up to about 86,000 acre-feet of water annually to the St. George metropolitan region to meet future water demands, diversify the regional water supply portfolio, and enhance water supply reliability.

From the outset of this new effort by the State of Utah to advance this proposed project, the Board has expressed several significant legal and operational concerns and issues associated with the project. Primarily, these issues revolve around the interbasin transfer and water use accounting aspects under the current Law of the River, as well as potential impacts to operations at Flaming Gorge Dam and Reservoir, and Lakes Powell and Mead. Generally, Board staff continue to maintain that seven states consensus and federal legislation will likely be required in order for the proposed LPP Project to move forward.

Since the last Board meeting, Board staff have worked closely with the California agencies, the State of Utah, and representatives of the other five Colorado River Basin States (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Wyoming) in trying to identify an acceptable process that could lead to the seven state consensus needed for the LPP Project to move forward. While discussions among the small group of state representatives over the past two weeks were ultimately unsuccessful, the other six Basin States, including California, have agreed to not only submit individual comments on behalf of each state, but have also joined in the submittal of a six-state letter to Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt. The primary "ask" of the joint six-state letter is that the Secretary of the Interior not issue a Final EIS or Record of

Decision related to the proposed LPP Project until there is seven state consensus regarding the outstanding legal and operational concerns that have been identified. The six-state letter also prominently commits the six states to continue to work in good faith to identify consensus solutions to interstate questions raised by the LPP Project, as well as continue to rely upon the seven states collaborative decision-making process that has served the Basin well for nearly thirty years.

The Board's DEIS comment letter and the six-state letter to Interior Secretary Bernhardt were submitted on the deadline of September 8, 2020, and have been included in the materials distributed to Board members. In conclusion, it remains very important to continue to work with all seven states and Interior in developing a path forward for resolution of the outstanding issues and to maintain the framework of the seven state process as the states and contractors enter the challenging period of developing the next set of interim operating guidelines.

Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan System Conservation Options

On August 24, 2020, staff from the Board and Board member agencies participated in a webinar hosted by Reclamation to discuss options for creating additional conserved System water supplies through a variety of water conservation projects in accordance with the 2019 Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP). The Lower Basin DCP Agreement, signed on May 20, 2019, states, in Section 3b, that:

> "Subject to applicable law, including the availability of appropriations . . . The Secretary will take affirmative actions to implement Lower Basin programs designed to create or conserve 100,000 acre-feet per annum or more of Colorado River System water to contribute to conservation of water supplies in Lake Mead and other Colorado River reservoirs in the Lower Basin."

Reclamation tasked a small working group in its Denver Federal Center office to identify some initial options or activities that could be developed and implemented to help meet the 2019 Lower Basin DCP System Conservation contribution requirements (i.e., an obligation to provide about 0.700 MAF over the period 2019-2025). During the webinar, Reclamation shared a preliminary list of the projects, and sought initial feedback and additional ideas for potential water conservation/augmentation projects that can be implemented through the end of the DCP implementation period of 2026. Reclamation indicated that its final System Conservation Plan is expected to be completed by December 2020. Some projects discussed during the webinar included the following:

- Development of System Conservation agreements with agricultural water users;
- Minute No. 323 System Conservation agreement to create 50,000 acre-feet;
- Sanchez Mejorada Canal forebay sediment removal dredging and capacity restoration project;

- Minute No. 242 Wellfield Pumping Expansion Project in conjunction with infrastructure improvements connecting the Minute No. 242 wellfield with the Yuma Mesa Conduit; and
- Evaluation of the limited operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant also remains under consideration by Reclamation.

Board staff held a follow-up informal workshop, via webinar, on September 8, 2020, with interested Board member agency technical staff to discuss not only the options preliminarily identified by Reclamation, but also identify other feasible options that could be considered by Reclamation in the context of its obligations under the Lower Basin DCP. This effort is likely to be beneficial as all of the Lower Basin stakeholders continue to consider potential options for developing and implementing additional measures that conserve or augment existing System water supplies. Efforts like this will be important as the process to develop the next set of interim operating guidelines and companion Minute with Mexico are initiated over the next year or more.

Retirement of Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region Regional Director

On Friday, September 4, 2020, Reclamation Lower Colorado Region Regional Director, Terry Fulp, PhD., indicated that he is announcing his plans to retire from federal service on October 24, 2020. Reclamation intends to make the formal announcement of Terry's retirement on September 8, 2020. Dr. Fulp has thirty-one years of federal service with Reclamation, and eight years as Lower Colorado Region's Regional Director. Beyond his contributions as an important part of Reclamation's leadership team, Terry was instrumental in developing and significantly expanding the role of hydrologic and reservoir system modeling capabilities in the Colorado River Basin, and helping to effect the shifting of the Colorado River Simulation System (CRSS) from its FORTRAN platform onto its current RiverWare platform.

Terry also closely collaborated with all of the stakeholders in the Lower Basin from the early-1990s on in the development of important programs, including: improved water use and accounting procedures, off-stream storage rule, 1999 Interim Surplus Guidelines, 2003 Quantification Settlement Agreement, 2005 Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, 2007 Interim Guidelines and management of the Intentionally Created Surplus program, numerous Minutes with Mexico, System Conservation program, and the development of the 2019 Drought Contingency Plans. Board staff are preparing a resolution acknowledging Dr. Fulp's many years of leadership and contributions for consideration and adoption at the regularly scheduled October Board meeting on October 14, 2020.

Washington, D.C. Report

Appropriations

The Congress will return to Washington, D.C., after the Labor Day holiday to address a number of pressing issues, including not only a possible COVID19 relief package, but also an emergency supplemental in response to Hurricane Laura, as well as the fast approaching deadline to pass a Continuing Resolution to keep the federal government operating along with a number of other expiring provisions.

Snow Water Supply Forecasting Program Authorization Act

California's senior Senator, Diane Feinstein, and California Rep. Josh Harder introduced companion legislation in the Senate and House that would provide $15 million to restart a novel program for monitoring Western water supplies. The bills would fund a program that uses sensors mounted on airplanes to estimate the amount of water held in mountain snowpack. Airborne monitoring is more accurate than traditional, ground-based measurements, which are limited in their scope.

NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory had operated the airborne snowpack survey flights until last December, when it spun off the venture to the private sector. The bill would bring the program back under the public umbrella, establishing an airborne monitoring program within the Department of the Interior. Both bills are supported by numerous water associations and districts across California.

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