

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

December 9, 2020

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT

As of November 30th, the surface water elevation at Lake Powell was 3,587.87 feet with 10.63 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 44% of capacity. The surface water elevation at Lake Mead was 1,081.04 feet with 10.10 MAF of storage, or 39% of capacity. As of November 29th, the total system storage was 27.92 MAF, or 47% of capacity, which is about 3.27 MAF less than the total system storage at this same time last year.

As of December 1st, the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, ranged from 62% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 85% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 92% of capacity at Morrow Point, and 48% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 64% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

Finally, as of November 16th, the forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year (WY) 2021 is 6.8 MAF (63% of normal). The forecasted April through July 2021 runoff into Lake Powell for Water Year-2021 is 4.55 MAF (64% of normal). For WY-2021, the October observed Lake Powell inflow was 0.09 MAF (18% of normal), and the November Lake Powell inflow forecast is 0.26 MAF (55% of normal). To date, WY-2021 precipitation is 60% and the current basin snowpack is 76% of normal.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

Paradox Valley Salinity Control Program

Reclamation has indicated its intent to publish the Paradox Valley Salinity Control Project Final EIS notice of availability in the Federal Register on Friday, December 4, 2020. Once the notice of availability is published, the Final EIS is expected to be available to the public beginning December 11th via this link: <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/paradox/index.html>. 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 a point-source salinity control project and 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.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

The Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program met via webinar on November 18th. The AMWG discussed a proposed “spring disturbance flow” that is tentatively planned for March 2021. The proposed dam release is not one of the experimental releases identified in the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP), but would work within the operational flexibility available under the LTEMP. The proposed spring disturbance flow would build off of flow changes required for maintenance in March 2021. Reclamation plans to conduct repairs to the concrete apron below Glen Canyon Dam, which would require lowering releases to 4,000 cfs (or half of the normal minimum release) for several 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. The AMWG recommended that the Secretary of the Interior implement this spring disturbance flow. The AMWG also recommended that a research and monitoring project to evaluate the effects of this flow be included in the FY2021-2023 Triennial Budget and Work Plan.

The Technical Work Group will meet January 20-22, 2021 for a meeting in conjunction with the Glen Canyon Dam Program’s Annual Reporting meeting, which summarizes the previous year’s research and the status of resources.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) met via webinar on October 28th. The Steering Committee reviewed and approved the *Native Fish Augmentation Plan* for 2021-2025. The plan provides a framework to guide fish stocking and rearing activities over the next several years. These activities are a significant aspect of the LCR MSCP, which has a commitment to stock approximately 1.2 million native endangered fish (i.e., specifically, razorback sucker and bonytail) over its fifty-year term. LCR MSCP staff reported that, through FY-2020, approximately 342,000 native fish had been stocked by the Program. The Steering Committee also reviewed the FY-2021 Funding Schedule, which lays out the funding cost share

and quarterly payments for the FY-2021 Program cost of \$30.3 million. Finally, LCR MSCP staff reported that the group's usual January science meetings, the Colorado River Aquatic Biologists (CRAB) and Colorado River Terrestrial and Riparian (CRTR) meetings, have been cancelled as a result of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Implementation of Minute No. 323

Currently, the two sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission (i.e., USIBWC and CILA) are preparing a Joint Report of the Principal Engineers regarding the development, use, and accounting for annual water uses for environmental purposes pursuant to the Minute. The two sections are working to develop points-of-tentative-agreement that will be utilized to develop the Principal Engineers' Joint Report. The report will describe the management and accounting aspects related to the 210,000 acre-feet of water that is to be used for habitat restoration and maintenance purposes through the remainder of the term of the Minute. It is expected that the Joint Report will be finalized in early 2021.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Effectiveness Review of the 2007 Colorado River Interim Operating Guidelines

As has been reported previously, Reclamation is currently conducting an "effectiveness review" of the 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead (2007 Interim Guidelines). The effectiveness review is required pursuant to Part G, Section 7, Subsection D of the 2007 Interim Guidelines. The review is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidelines with respect to the purposes and operational elements of the 2007 Interim Guidelines. For example, one of the stated purposes of the guidelines is to improve Reclamation's management of the Colorado River by considering trade-offs between the frequency and magnitude of reductions of water deliveries, and considering the effects on water storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, and on water supply, power production, recreation, and other environmental resources.

Reclamation released the public draft of the effectiveness review report on October 23, 2020, and provided targeted outreach in October and November to Basin stakeholders. The final effectiveness review report is expected to be released in mid-December 2020.

Washington, D.C. Report

FY 2020 Appropriations

The Senate released its Fiscal Year 2021 spending plans. Within those plans, the budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would be just under \$9.1 billion, which is roughly the same as its current funding level. The House of Representatives bill offers \$9.38 billion for the EPA. The Senate bill provides more for Reclamation projects at \$1.69 billion compared to the House Bill that would provide \$1.64 billion. The total U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding in the Senate bill is also slightly higher at \$7.72 billion compared to \$7.6 billion in the House Bill. The Congress has until December 11th to finalize and pass their appropriations bills, when federal funding for FY-2020 runs out based on the current Continuing Resolution agreement.

Water Resources Development Act

It is possible that Congress may attach a non-controversial Water Resources Development Act to its federal spending bill. While the details of a compromise package have yet to emerge, both the House and Senate bills include provisions regarding flood resiliency planning, flood control, and risk management for various communities. The bills also address studies and reports, authorize feasibility studies for water resource development projects and conservation, and direct expedited completion of feasibility studies currently underway. Both bills would authorize a flood risk management project on the Little Colorado in Arizona.

Future Groundwater in the Colorado River Basin

Using climate models, U.S. Geological Survey researchers are projecting divergent groundwater futures for the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins. Groundwater infiltration is expected to increase in the Upper Basin, due to slightly more precipitation and warmer winters. In the Lower Basin, meanwhile, warmer weather and less precipitation indicate less groundwater recharge in the coming decades.

Salton Sea Legislation

Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA-36) introduced the Salton Sea Public Health and Environmental Protection Act of 2020 (H.R. 8775) based on input from the Salton Sea Partnership supported by organizations like the National Audubon Society, Environmental Defense Fund, and the Pacific Institute. This bill would codify a 2016 MOU between California and the federal government to collaborate on habitat and dust suppression projects at the Salton Sea to avoid and minimize

impacts to people and wildlife due to water reduction. The bill would require the Dept. of the Interior to match efforts by California to implement restoration and dust control projects, enhance interagency coordination, expedite permits, and require reports to Congress and the public about public health hazards and progress of mitigation projects.

President-Elect Biden's Transition Activities at EPA and Interior

The Biden transition teams are forming for the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Interior, mostly staffed by volunteers. (<https://buildbackbetter.gov/the-transition/agency-review-teams/>)

For the Department of the Interior, Kevin Washburn is the Team Lead. Most recently he was employed by the University of Iowa, but he is a former Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. Other team members and their most recent employment include: Bob Anderson, Harvard Law School; Bret Birdsong, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Boyd School of Law; Shannon Estenoz, the Everglades Foundation; Chris Goranson, Carnegie Mellon University, The Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy; Janie Hipp, Native American Agriculture Fund; Kate Kelly, Center for American Progress; Elizabeth Klein, New York University, School of Law, State Energy and Environmental Impact Center; Amanda Leiter, American University, Washington College of Law; Molly McUsic, Wyass Foundation; Clara Pratte, Strongbow Strategies; Maggie Thomas, Evergreen Action; and Tanya Trujillo, Colorado River Sustainability Campaign.

With respect to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Patrice Simms is the Team Lead from Earth Justice. Other team members include: Amanda Aguirre, Blue Crab Strategies; Ann Dunkin, Dell Technologies; Matt Fritz, Lathan & Watkins LLP; Lisa Garcia, Grist Magazine, Inc.; Cynthia Giles, Harvard Environmental and Energy Law Program; Joseph Goffman, Harvard Law School; Ken Kopocis, American University, Washington College of Law (and a former nominee for Assistant Administrator for Water); Michael McCabe, self-employed; Billie McGrane, Pennsylvania Democratic Party; Alejandra Nunez, Sierra Club; and Luseni Pieh, self-employed.



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Brandon L. Gebhart, P.E.
Director

December 7, 2020

Mr. Richard Juricich
Colorado River Board of California
770 Fairmont Ave., Suite 100
Glendale, CA 91203-1035

Dear Mr. Juricich,

On behalf of the Wyoming Water Development Office and our Director Brandon Gebhart, we would like to express our gratitude for your generous contribution toward this season's cloud seeding project in the Wind River Mountains. Your support is crucial to the vitality of the project, and increasing run-off in the Green River basin. Please know that we are greatly appreciative of your contribution, and longstanding relationship, especially during such an unprecedented and uncertain time this past year.

We will continue to include you in formal project meetings, outreach events, project updates and progress during this operational season, and end-of-season operations reports. Feel free to contact me (julie.gondzar@wyo.gov or 307-777-7626) any time with questions or requests as frequently as you like.

Thank you again for your support and contribution to this project. We are honored to have you as a long-standing funding partner for another season of cloud seeding over the Wind River Mountains!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie A. Gondzar".

Julie Gondzar
Program Manager