

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

April 10, 2019

ADMINISTRATION

Minutes of the March 13, 2019 Meeting of the Colorado River Board

A draft of the minutes from the March 13, 2019 meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (Board) was held in Ontario, California, has been prepared and is included in the Board folder for review and proposed adoption during the April Board meeting.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORT

As of April 8th, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,568.77 feet with 9.00 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 37% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,089.85 feet with 10.84 MAF of storage, or 42% of capacity. As of March 31st, the total system storage was 26.79 MAF, or 45% of capacity, which is about 4.0 MAF less than the system storage at this same time last year.

As of April 1st, the Upper Colorado River basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, ranged from 27% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 85% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 91% of capacity at Morrow Point and 30% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoirs in Colorado; and 57% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of April 2nd, the unregulated forecasted inflow in Lake Powell for Water Year 2019 is 12.1 MAF (112% of normal). The forecasted April to July 2019 runoff into Lake Powell is projected to be 9.2 MAF (128% of normal). The March 2019 observed Lake Powell inflow was 0.62 MAF (94% of normal), and the April Lake Powell inflow forecast is 1.30 MAF (123% of normal). The WY-2019 precipitation to date is 119% of normal. The current basin snowpack is 130% of normal.

Colorado Basin River Forecast Center Water Supply Webinar

On April 4th, the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) held a webinar to provide an update of current and forecasted water supply conditions. The above average precipitation

conditions that the Basin experienced in February continued through March. During the first half of March, the Basin experienced substantial precipitation as a result of two significant storm systems with a sub-tropical moisture source. In the areas of southwest and central Utah and Colorado, precipitation conditions ranged from 110% to 300% of average, with some areas receiving record-setting snowpack. During March, temperatures in the Basin were cooler, which helped preserve carry-over snowpack from previous months at lower elevations. Early April SNOTEL values and modeled snow conditions indicated above average snowpack conditions, with the exception of average to slightly below-average snowpack conditions in the Upper Green River basin.

It is expected that dry soil conditions in the Upper Colorado Basin may impact runoff volumes. However, there will be less impact in areas that encounter delayed snowpack melt, due to cooler temperatures, and that have significant snowpack conditions. In the Lower Colorado Basin, soil moisture conditions have improved due to recent precipitation events and more efficient runoff is likely due to additional rainfall in the area.

Since early February, the April through July inflow forecasts for Lake Powell have increased by nearly 4 MAF. The water supply forecast projects a greater than 90% chance that inflow into Lake Powell will be at average or better, which could result in the 2nd highest observed runoff volume in the last 22 years (see Figure 1 below).

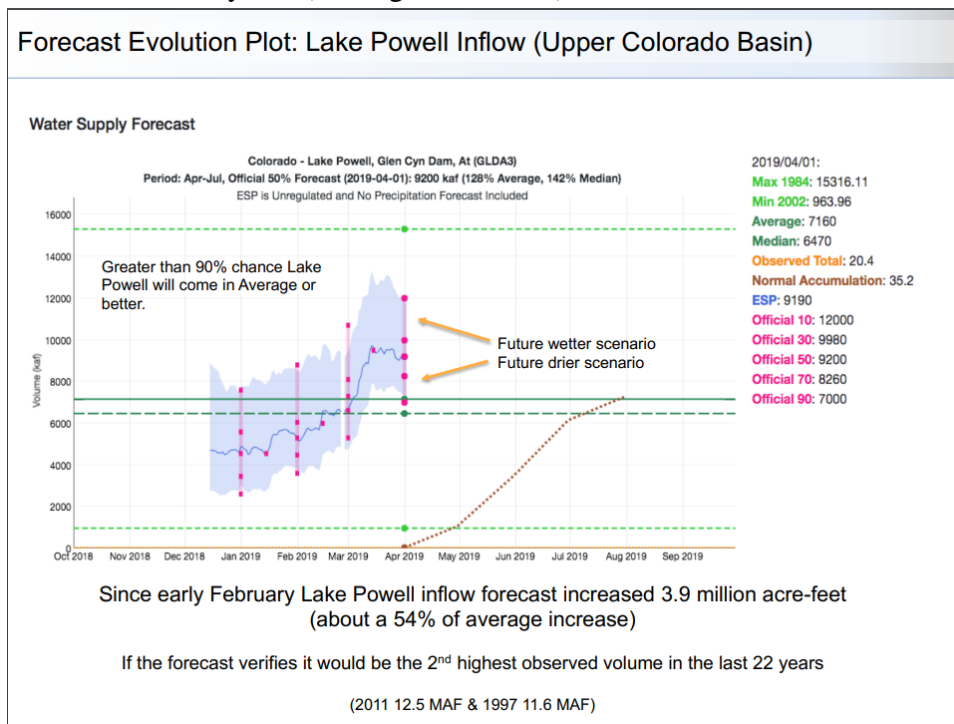


Figure 1: Lake Powell Forecast Evolution Plot

The CBRFC also discussed peak flows and the potential for high water conditions and flooding, noting that more information regarding these conditions would be determined over the next six weeks. It was also noted that areas experiencing delayed melt and/or increased snowpack into mid-May could have a greater potential for flooding.

Weather models project a weak storm system moving through the northern Great Basin and Colorado River Basin during the first weekend of April. The first week of April will also experience warmer temperatures which could enhance snowmelt in some areas in the Basin.

During the second week of April, it is anticipated that a colder storm system will move through central Utah and northern Colorado, which could bring several inches of snow to the mountains and to lower elevations. The 8-day to 14-day weather and precipitation outlook anticipates wetter and cooler conditions for the first half of April with periodic warming between storms, resulting in slow increases in snowmelt in middle elevations and southern areas of the Basin.

Accounting and Water Use Report for Calendar Year 2018

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is currently in the process of preparing the Accounting and Water Use Report for Calendar-Year 2018. On March 29th, Reclamation released the first draft of the California section of the report, which contains specific Colorado River water uses in California. Comments to the first draft were submitted to Reclamation on Monday, April 8th.

After Reclamation evaluates and incorporates any comments from the Lower Basin States regarding their respective sections of report, Reclamation would then issue the second draft containing the combined reports for all three Lower Basin states. Staff will provide an update on the status and review of the 2018 water accounting report at subsequent Board meetings.

Development of 2020 Colorado River Annual Operating Plan (AOP)

Reclamation has released the proposed consultation schedule for the development of the 2020 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for Colorado River Reservoirs. The first consultation meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 4th via webinar. The second and the final 2020 AOP consultation meetings will be held on Thursday, July 25th, and Thursday, September 5th, respectively, at McCarran Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada, and will also be available via webinar.

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 the projected operations for the upcoming water year. Based on the operating

criteria established within the 2007 Interim Guidelines, the August 24-Month Study Report projections for the following year sets the operational tiers for the coordinated operations of Lakes Powell and Mead.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM REPORTS

Status of Colorado River Basin Drought Contingency Planning Efforts

On March 19, 2019, representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin States met in Phoenix, Arizona, and signed a seven-states letter that accompanied the submittal of proposed federal legislation and the draft interstate Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) agreements to the United States Congress. At this same signing ceremony, Reclamation Commissioner Burman signed a notice rescinding the February 6th *Federal Register* notice (80 FR 2244), thereby alleviating the request for recommendations from the seven states Governors and Basin States representatives regarding actions to protect the System in lieu of DCP implementation.

On March 27-28, 2019, oversight hearings regarding the Colorado River Basin DCPs were held by the Senate's Water and Power Subcommittee and the House's Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee. On March 27th, the Senate subcommittee heard from Reclamation Commissioner Burman and from Tom Buschatzke (Arizona), John Entsminger (Nevada), and Pat Tyrrell (Wyoming). On March 28th, the House subcommittee then received testimony from Commissioner Burman and from representatives of each of the seven Basin states, including the Board's Chairman Nelson on behalf of California.

The oral testimony provided to both subcommittees focused on the need to implement the DCPs in order to more effectively manage the water resources of the Colorado River System and reduce the decline of storage in both Lakes Powell and Mead. The seven states provided testimony regarding the DCPs in the context of the need for Congressional action related to proposed federal legislation authorizing the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to implement both the Upper and Lower Basin DCPs for the remaining period of the 2007 Interim Guidelines (i.e., through the development and adoption of the 2026 Annual Operating Plan).

The proposed federal legislation submitted under the cover of the March 19th Basin States letter and the DCP interstate agreements package was subsequently modified by House and Senate members and committee staff. U.S. Senator Martha McSally (R-AZ) and House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) have released companion bills that would authorize implementation of the DCP agreements through 2026. The DCP legislation was on the House suspension calendar for April 8th and was passed that same day. The legislation was then passed in the Senate later that same evening. The legislation now goes to the president for signature

into law. A copy of the version of the DCP legislation that was passed by the Congress has been included in the handout materials for the Board meeting.

A short meeting of the Minute No. 323 Minute Oversight Group was held in Mexico City at the Mexican federal Foreign Affairs Office building on April 2nd. This was attended by U.S. representatives from Reclamation, Mexican representatives of CONAGUA, U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission, and representatives of the Basin States. The purpose of the meeting was to formally inform Mexico that the domestic efforts to finalize implementation of the DCPs were nearly completed.

The completion of the domestic DCPs will trigger the process for implementation of Section IV of Minute No. 323, i.e., Mexico's Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan. The intent is to have Mexico's Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan fully effective by the time of the release of the August 2019 24-Month Study Report. In order to have Section IV of Minute No. 323 fully effective by the release of the August 2019 24-Month Study Report, the U.S. domestic DCP must be fully effective by the third week in April due to the 100-day notification requirement in the Minute. The August 24-Month Study Report projections of January 1st system storage and reservoir water surface elevations determine the operational tiers for the coordinated operation of Lakes Powell and Mead in the Annual Operating Plan. A small binational working group has been charged with developing the process and schedule leading to the activation and implementation of the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan prior to the release of the August 2019 24-Month Study Report.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum's Work Group is scheduled to meet in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Wednesday, April 17th and Thursday, April 18th. The Forum will hold its Spring meeting on June 5-6, 2019, at the Colorado State Capitol in Denver, Colorado. This will be the 100th meeting of the Forum and will be held at the same place as the first meeting of the Forum in November 1973. The Work Group will also meet in Denver two days prior to the Forum meeting.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

The Technical Work Group (TWG) of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program met on March 12-14 in Phoenix, Arizona, in conjunction with the program's Annual Reporting meeting. The group heard updates on the status of resources within the Grand Canyon. The humpback chub population at the Little Colorado River inflow appears to be stable or slightly increasing, although juvenile fish production has been low for several years. If this trend continues, it could have detrimental effects on the overall population, although researchers are hopeful that

spring floods on the Little Colorado River this year will increase spawning. Humpback chub populations in Western Grand Canyon were lower in 2018 than in 2017, but still higher than in previous years.

Rainbow trout populations have increased significantly since their low point in 2014/2015, and angler catch rates have also improved. However, Arizona Game and Fish Department is planning to stock as many as 6,000 sterile rainbow trout near Lees Ferry during the summer 2019, to further bolster angling. Catch rates of brown trout, a nonnative with the potential to significantly impact native fish populations, have stabilized since increasing rapidly in 2016 and 2017, but still remain historically high.

Researchers focused on the effects of high flow experiments (HFEs) on various resources. Regular HFEs have been implemented at Glen Canyon Dam since 2012 and were a major part of the recent Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) EIS, finalized in 2016 and slated to guide experimental management at Glen Canyon Dam for twenty years. The most recent HFE was conducted in fall 2018; preliminary results show that it was at least as effective at rebuilding eroded beaches as previous HFEs, despite being shorter in duration. However, the regular implementation of fall HFEs has coincided with a sudden increase in brown trout in the upper reaches of the river. A clear link between fall HFEs and brown trout has not been established, but has driven interest in shifting HFE implementation from fall to spring. Spring high flows are expected to disrupt brown trout recruitment, but the ability to implement spring HFEs is limited due to sediment availability and LTEMP guidelines. The TWG and Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) will continue to discuss potential adjustments to HFEs to manage various risks and competing resources.

The LTEMP planning team has met several times via teleconference to discuss potential experimental actions for 2019. The group has moved forward with a recommendation to continue to conduct “bug flows” at Glen Canyon Dam in summer 2019. These low, steady weekend flows were held from May to August 2018 and initial results indicate they improved aquatic insect diversity and distribution, as well as increasing overall angler satisfaction. A final determination by DOI on whether to conduct the experimental flows is expected by April 26th.

Finally, the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group is scheduled to hold a teleconference call and webinar on May 22nd.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California are sponsoring a dedication ceremony for the new Dennis Underwood Conservation Area on April 16th in Blythe, California. The new habitat,

located at the southern end of the Palo Verde Irrigation District, is expected to comprise about 600 acres of cottonwood-willow and honey mesquite land-cover types.

Finally, the LCR MSCP Steering Committee will meet on April 24th in Las Vegas, Nevada, and the Work Group will meet on May 8-9 in San Diego, California, to discuss the proposed 2020 work plan and accomplishments report.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Washington, D.C. Updates

Nominations

Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt's Energy and Natural Resources Committee confirmation hearing was held last week where he was reported favorably out of the Committee. A full Senate vote on his confirmation as the next Secretary of the Department of the Interior is expected in the coming weeks. Bernhardt previously served as the Department's deputy under President Trump, as well as its top lawyer during the second Bush administration.

Western Water Hearings

Two weeks ago, both the House and the Senate held hearings on the Colorado River Drought Contingency Plans. Last week the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife also held a hearing on broader western water issues and concerns.

Colorado River Basin Drought Contingency Plan Legislation

U.S. Senator Martha McSally (R-AZ) and House Natural Resources Chairman Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) have released companion bills that would authorize DCP plan agreements through 2026. The Drought Contingency Plan legislation is on the House suspension calendar for April 8th and was passed later that same day. The legislation then went to the Senate and was also passed on April 8th.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler's Global Water Security Remarks

Mr. Andrew Wheeler, who is now the Senate confirmed EPA Administrator, recently made several remarks elevating global water security as one of the EPA's top priorities. At a speech at the Wilson Center, Administrator Wheeler stated that, "It is our hope that we can elevate these issues to global priority and generate the urgency and unity needed to address them."