

Minutes of Meeting  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  
Wednesday, September 11, 2019

A meeting of the Colorado River Board (Board) of California was held on Wednesday, September 11, 2019 at the Sheraton Ontario Airport Hotel, 429 North Vineyard Avenue, Ontario, California 91764.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

Nicole Neeman-Brady (Public Member)  
David DeJesus (MWD Alternate)  
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)  
James Hanks (IID)  
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)  
Henry Kuiper (Public Member)

Peter Nelson, Chairman (CVWD)  
Glen D. Peterson (MWD)  
David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)  
Jack Seiler (PVID Alternate)  
David Vigil (DFW Alternate)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

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

Jim Madaffer (SDCWA)  
John Powell, Jr. (CVWD Alternate)  
Mark Watton (SDCWA Alternate)

Others Present:

Steve Abbott  
Melissa Baum Haley  
Christopher Harris  
Bill Hasencamp  
Michael Hughes  
Ned Hyduke  
Lisa Johansen  
Rich Juricich  
Laura Lamdin  
Tom Levy  
Lindia Liu  
Aaron Mead

Dylan Mohamed  
Jessica Neuwerth  
Anisa Patch  
Angela Rashid  
Ivory Reyburn  
Kelly Rogers  
Shanti Rosset  
Tom Ryan  
Gary Tavetian  
Kimberlyn Velasquez  
Margaret Vick  
Jerry Zimmerman

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nelson announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:11 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 June 12, 2019, Board meeting minutes. Mr. Fisher moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Pettijohn. By roll-call vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORTS**

### **Colorado River Basin Report**

Ms. Rashid reported that as of September 3<sup>rd</sup>, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,617.75 feet with 13.53 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 56% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,083.47 feet with 10.30 MAF of storage, or 39% of capacity. As of June 9<sup>th</sup>, the total system storage was 32.10 MAF, or 54% of capacity, which is about 3.5 MAF less than the system storage at this same time last year.

Ms. Rashid reported that Water Year-2019 will be ending on September 30<sup>th</sup>, adding that the forecasted inflow for Lake Powell is 13.2 MAF, or 125% of normal. The Observed April to July 2019 runoff into Lake Powell is projected to be 10.41 MAF, or 94% of normal. The August 2019 observed Lake Powell inflow was 0.47 MAF, or 94% of normal, and the September forecasted Lake Powell inflow is 0.39 MAF, or 94% of normal. To date, the Water Year-2019 precipitation is 114%.

Ms. Rashid reported that precipitation conditions in July and August were below average throughout the Basin, noting that monsoonal activity was below average.

Ms. Rashid reported that as of September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Upper Basin reservoirs were close to capacity. She also reported on the regulatory storage conditions in the Lower Basin. As of August 29<sup>th</sup>, Brock and Senator Wash reservoirs captured 86,031 AF and 75,362 AF, respectively. Ms.

Rashid reported excess flows to Mexico were 4,674 AF through September 3<sup>rd</sup>. As of September 4<sup>th</sup>, the total bypassed to the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico is 62, 914 AF.

Mr. Harris reported that Reclamation will be conducting maintenance operations on the U.S. section of the Main Outlet Drain Extension (MODE) between the Northerly International Boundary (NIB) and the Southerly International Boundary (SIB). The Mexican government will also be conducting maintenance on Mexico's section of the MODE down to the Cienega. For the next 120 days, about 35,000 AF of saline drainage that would normally go to the Cienega will be rerouted to the main river channel below Morelos Dam and discharge into the limithrope, to percolate into the regional aquifer. Mr. Harris explained that on the U.S. side Reclamation will dredge the MODE and replace leaking concrete panels. U.S and Mexican non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are developing a monitoring program to observe the potential impacts on the Cienega. Responding to a question regarding the salinity impact of the project, Mr. Harris stated that the water in the Main Outlet Drain Extension Canal has a salinity of about 4,000 ppm and may increase salinity to the aquifer that is pumped by Mexico.

Ms. Rashid reported that on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) held a webinar to discuss the results of the 2019 August 24-Month Study projections. The most probable end of Calendar Year-2019 elevation for Lake Powell is projected to be 3,618.56 feet, indicating that the reservoir will be operated in the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier with the most probable release of 8.23 MAF in 2020. The most probable end of Calendar Year-2019 elevation for Lake Mead is projected to be 1,089.40 feet and operations in 2020 will be governed by the normal or ICS surplus conditions and the implementation of the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (LB DCP) and the Minute 323 Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan. Ms. Rashid explained that this will result in contributions from Arizona (192,000 AF), Nevada (8,000 AF) and Mexico (41,000 AF). Mr. Harris added that Tier 0 LB DCP contribution threshold is 1,090 feet.

Ms. Rashid reported that Reclamation released the updated 2019 August Colorado River Simulation System (CRSS) future projected Colorado River system conditions over the next 5 years, which was last updated in June. Ms. Rashid explained that since June the probability for a shortage in the Lower Basin decreased slightly by two percentage points in 2021 and 2022 but increased by six percentage points in 2023 and 2024.

Ms. Rashid reported that Reclamation held its third and final consultation meeting for the 2020 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) on September 5<sup>th</sup> in McCarran Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada and via webinar. Ms. Rashid reported that Lake Powell will be operated in accordance with the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier with a most probable release of 8.23 MAF from Glen Canyon Dam. Lake Mead will be operated in accordance with normal and ICS surplus conditions.

Lastly, Ms. Rashid reported that on August 21<sup>st</sup>, the Basin States Climate and Hydrology Workgroup released a draft of the State of the Science (SOS) report. Ms. Rashid reminded the Board that the Workgroup was developed after the Basin States Climate and Hydrology symposium held in 2017. She reported that the purpose of the report is to synthesize and assess the current science on Basin climate and hydrology and to identify knowledge gaps and uncertainties. Comments on the draft report are due September 17<sup>th</sup> and a Workgroup conference call is scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Harris noted that the Six Agency Committee contributed \$15,000 for the development of the SOS report. Mr. Harris reported that better coordination between NOAA agencies and Reclamation could help reduce some of the knowledge gaps and uncertainties that exist in Basin climate and hydrology science and knowledge.

### **State and Local Report**

Ms. Jones, representing the California Department of Water Resources (CA DWR), reported that the State's precipitation for Water Year-2019 is above average. She reported that the State's annual precipitation has been very variable, noting the State suffered a drought from 2012 to 2016, followed by the wettest year on record in terms of state-wide runoff in 2017 and average precipitation in 2018. Ms. Jones reported a warm wall of water is forming off the Pacific Coast, like what occurred in 2015/2016. Ms. Jones noted that this might lead to ridging and might predispose the State to drier conditions, noting that it is just speculation at this point. She added that the warm water is not good for marine life.

Ms. Jones reported that the State's reservoir storage is above average. She noted that the central coast of California is recovering from past drought conditions slower than other parts of the State. Mr. Harris inquired about the magnitude of warming in the Pacific Ocean. Ms. Jones remarked that long-term records indicate that the temperatures could be as much as ten degrees above average.

Board member Peterson, representing The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, the combined reservoir storage is 91% of capacity. Mr. Peterson stated that MWD has been developing groundwater storage in the Antelope Valley. Mr. Peterson reported that MWD has about 1 MAF of water stored in its storage accounts and water use in MWD's service area was normal.

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

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

Board Staff Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Minute 323 Environmental Work Group (EWG) met June 27-28 in San Diego, California. Ms. Neuwerth noted that the EWG is responsible for overseeing the use of \$18 million and 210,000 acre-feet of water under Minute 323. Several

habitats have been created in the Colorado River Delta, and the EWG plans to fund expansion of several of these sites in the next year. Ms. Neuwerth also reported that no federal water has yet been delivered to any of the habitats, and the EWG is discussing how best to make use of future federal water deliveries to the Delta.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to undertake repairs to the Main Outlet Drain Extension (MODE), which carries saline drainage from the Yuma area to the Gulf of California, where it is discharged into a large wetland, the Cienega de Santa Clara. Ms. Neuwerth noted that the drainage will instead be routed into the old river channel for several months. Ms. Neuwerth reported that monitoring will be conducted to evaluate the effects of the activity.

Mr. Harris reported that the Desalination Work Group for Minute 323 had received a preliminary draft feasibility assessment on the potential to conduct desalination on the Sonoran Coast in the Gulf of California. The draft report identifies five sites where desalination may be feasible. Mr. Harris noted that challenges facing desalination projects in the area include a lack of nearby water users available to take delivery of product water, the lack of available power generation and transmission, and the need to build product water conveyance to Mexican or U.S. water users. Mr. Harris reported that another draft of the report will be prepared for review by the Desalination Work Group. Finally, Mr. Harris noted that future feasibility assessments could evaluate the potential for desalination on the Baja coast of the Gulf of California or on the Pacific Coast.

In response to a question, Mr. Harris noted that the draft feasibility assessment evaluates the possibility of multiple desalination plants producing a total of about 200,000 acre-feet of product water.

### **Status of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program**

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) met August 21-22 in Flagstaff, Arizona. Ms. Neuwerth reported that the group recommended approval of the FY-20 Budget and Work Plan, which includes approximately \$11 million, most of which goes to support monitoring and research in the Grand Canyon. Ms. Neuwerth also reported that the likelihood of conducting a high-flow experiment (HFE) this fall at Glen Canyon Dam currently appears quite low, due to limited tributary sediment input.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the AMWG discussed a guidance document provided by Secretary of the Interior's designee to the program, Dr. Tim Petty. Ms. Neuwerth noted that the document describes the administration's priorities for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program, including continued implementation of the Long-Term and Experimental

Management Plan EIS, consideration of spring high flows, and consideration of flows that increase hydropower production.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the AMWG received an update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which proposed last year to downlist two native fish found in the area, the razorback sucker and humpback chub, from endangered to threatened. Ms. Neuwerth noted that the downlisting proposals are expected to be accompanied by a rule specifying what protections the species would be afforded. Ms. Neuwerth reported that the downlisting proposal for the humpback chub is expected by the end of the year.

Finally, Ms. Neuwerth noted that the Technical Work Group would meet October 21-22 in Phoenix, Arizona.

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

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) Steering Committee met via teleconference on June 26<sup>th</sup> and approved the *Final Implementation Report, Fiscal Year 2020 Work Plan and Budget, Fiscal Year 2018 Accomplishment Report*, which looks at a three-year period of past, current, and future accomplishments and expenditures.

Ms. Neuwerth also reported that a small group has recently met to discuss changes to the LCR MSCP program coverage. The LCR MSCP provides environmental compliance for changes in flow along the Lower Colorado River, including up to 845,000 acre-feet of change in flow between Hoover and Davis Dams, 860,000 acre-feet of change in flow between Davis and Parker Dams, and 1.574 million acre-feet of change-in-flow between Parker and Imperial Dams. Ms. Neuwerth noted that the group of stakeholders is holding preliminary discussions on the possibility of increasing program coverage so that the entire river from Hoover Dam to Imperial Dam will have coverage for up to 1.574 million acre-feet of change in flow.

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

Board Staff Rich Juricich reported on the Work Group meeting held on August 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> in Salt Lake City, Utah. Mr. Juricich reported that the Work Group focused on the 2020 Triennial Review, with discussion on the US Bureau of Land Management contributions of watershed-based treatments accounted for by the Salinity Control Program in terms of tons of salt controlled each year. The Work Group is re-evaluating these contributions in the Triennial Review.

Mr. Juricich reported that the Work Group is also working on the Water Conservation memo, looking at salinity control benefits associated with water conservation. The Fall meeting will include the Advisory Council and the Forum in October in Phoenix, Arizona.

Mr. Juricich reported that the main topic at the Work Group meeting was on the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU). The PVU well has been shut down since early March due to an earthquake. By the end of September, Reclamation is expected to complete the analysis needed to determine whether to continue operating the well or to keep it shut down while exploring other alternatives. Reclamation released the Administrative Draft EIS for the next phase of the PVU project. The four alternatives being considered include 1) no action; 2) a new injection well; 3) evaporations ponds; and 4) zero-liquid discharge technology. The draft EIS will be released for public comment in November/ December. The final EIS is due to be released in May 2020.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Harris reported briefly on the U.S. House and Senate. Mr. Harris indicated that the House passed 10 of 12 appropriation bills but the Senate has yet to move forward on the bills. Mr. Harris indicated that the House passed its Fiscal Year 2020 Energy and Water Appropriations legislation on June 19<sup>th</sup>, which contains funding for Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Harris reported on the details of the House Energy and Water bill. Mr. Harris indicated that there would be an additional \$400 million for water resource projects, \$121 million for rural water projects above budget requests, \$510 million for SECURE Water Act, \$70 million for the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund, and \$5 million for the Lower Colorado River Basin development Fund.

Finally, Mr. Harris noted that the next meeting of the Colorado River Board would be October 9<sup>th</sup> and would be held in Ontario, California.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Pursuant to provisions of Article 9, commencing with Section 11120, of Chapter 1 of Part 1, Division 3 of Title 2 of the government Section Program 12516 and 12519 of the Water Code to discuss matters concerning interstate negotiations with representatives from other states or the federal government, a motion was made by Mr. Hanks to go into Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Kuiper. By roll-call vote, the motion was unanimously approved. The Board entered Executive Session at 11:05 and adjourned from executive session at 11:58.

## **REGULAR SESSION**

The Board resumed the regular session at 11:59 and Chairman Nelson reported that the Board held an Executive Session and that no action was taken by the Board.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Nelson adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.