

**MONTHLY REPORT TO THE
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA**

November 9, 2022

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT

As of October 31st, the surface water elevation of Lake Powell was 3,529.91 feet with nearly 5.83 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 25% of capacity. The surface water elevation of Lake Mead was 1,046.28 feet with 7.42 MAF of storage, or 28% of capacity. As of October 30th, the total System storage was 19.41 MAF, or 33% of capacity, which is about 3.15 MAF less than the total System storage at this time last year.

As of November 1st, storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, included the following volumes: 74% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 72% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 97% of capacity at Morrow Point and 32% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 52% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of October 19th, the September observed inflow into Lake Powell was 0.25 MAF (71% of normal) and the October forecasted inflow is 0.40 MAF (88% of normal). The preliminary observed inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year (WY) 2022 was 6.08 MAF (63% of normal). The observed April through July 2022 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell was 3.75 MAF (59% of normal).

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program Implementation

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum Meeting

The Colorado River Salinity Control Forum met October 24-26, in South Lake Tahoe, California. The Forum provided policy feedback on several program topics including proposals related to management and funding for the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund; Reclamation's proposed next steps for the Paradox Valley Unit; and the 2023 Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards for Salinity in the Colorado River System.

Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund

In an effort to partially address a long-term shortfall of required cost-share dollars generated by the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund (LCRBDF), the Program Funding Committee recommended that the Forum authorize the exploration of reducing the required cost share in the Natural Resources Conservation Service EQIP Program expenditures from 30% to somewhere around 15%. The proposal would seek legislation to reduce the cost share through the 2023 Farm Bill. The proposal would reduce the total cost share obligation by about \$3.1M of which about \$2.7M comes from the LCRBDF. Since the cost-share dollars are spent in the Program, this will reduce the dollars available for Program expenditure also by \$3.1M. The Forum directed the Funding Committee to further explore if the 15% value is sufficient to address the problem.

Related to the LCRBDF, the Forum endorsed a proposal by the Work Group that recommends Reclamation use the latest information from the CRMMS and CRSS operation models when projecting future power revenue from Hoover, Parker, and Davis dams. Power revenue is currently the only source of funding to support the states cost share requirements under the Salinity Control Program and is deposited through the LCRBDF.

Paradox Valley Unit Salinity Control Project

During the Forum meeting, Reclamation provided an update on the status of the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) salinity control project, and next steps beyond the functional end of the existing brine deep injection well. Reclamation restarted injection of brine at PVU on June 1st as part of a six-month test injection plan. Previously PVU has not operated since March 2019 in response to a significant seismic event. When fully operational, the PVU removed about 100,000 tons of salt per year that would have otherwise entered the Colorado River. Under the test injection plan, PVU is injecting brine at a rate of 115 gallons per minute, equivalent to approximately 5500 tons of salt control per month (about 66% of the most recent injection capacity). Five months into the test there have been no significant operational issues or seismic events. The injection test program will end on December 1st, and it is anticipated that Reclamation will shut down the injection well for several weeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the test and determine next steps.

During the Forum meeting Reclamation outlined a process for moving forward with salinity control in Paradox Valley before the existing injection well has reached its end of life, which could be within the next several years. Reclamation is proposing to release a Statement of Objectives that would highlight the program goals and objectives for salinity control at Paradox Valley and solicit private industry to make proposals to provide a solution. Reclamation stated that a new

Environmental Impact Statement would likely be needed to implement any new salt control activities in Paradox Valley. Reclamation has not provided a definitive schedule for releasing the State of Objectives and the Forum requested to be part of the process.

2023 Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards for Salinity in the Colorado River System

The Forum provided feedback regarding key modeling assumptions for the 2023 Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards for Salinity in the Colorado River System. Modeling assumptions include projected cost effectiveness of program implementation, program implementation rates, program funding, future hydrology, and operations of the Paradox Valley Unit. Assumptions include a PVU operation at 65,000 tons/year through 2027 and would consider both full operation and no operation of PVU beyond 2027. Section 303 of the Clean Water Act amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act requires that water quality standards are reviewed every three years by the Forum and are adopted by the water quality agencies of the seven basin states for inclusion in their state water quality standards.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

The Technical Work Group (TWG) of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) met via webinar October 12-13. The TWG received a report that Reclamation is preparing to initiate a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance process seeking flexibility for implementing operational alternatives at Glen Canyon Dam to reduce the threat of warmwater invasives below Glen Canyon Dam. Reclamation released a draft Project Management Plan (PMP) for this process on October 14. The TWG received a report from Reclamation that their report entitled “Glen Canyon Dam Fish Escapement Options” is now available. Reclamation is in the process of convening an expert committee to identify options which are most suitable for long term prevention of non-native fish passage through Glen Canyon Dam.

The TWG received a report that the National Park Service is coordinating rapid response actions to address recent observations of smallmouth bass. Electrofishing is anticipated to begin October 24 and conclude by the end of December.

The TWG received a report from the National Park Service on the chemical treatment of the upper and lower slough. The chemical treatment was implemented in response to recent identification of smallmouth bass in the slough. The following fish were removed following treatment of the slough with rotenone: 3,331 common carp, 810 green sunfish, 4 bluegill, and 4

rainbow trout. No smallmouth bass were collected in the slough immediately following the chemical treatment.

The TWG held a discussion with representatives from the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) regarding the potential effects of frequent use of bypass at Glen Dam on electrical generation and transmission. Potential issues identified from toggling between power generation and bypass include: the need to identify replacement energy and capacity, maintaining voltage control during transmission, meeting regulatory requirements, operating with reduced energy reserves, responding to emergencies, and Glen Canyon Dam's role as a black start facility.

The TWG received an update that razorback sucker augmentation efforts will begin this spring in Havasu Creek.

Finally, the GCDAMP will hold its Annual Reporting Meeting January 24-25. The TWG will meet January 26.

Lower Colorado River Multi- Species Conservation Program

The Steering Committee of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) met on October 26. The Steering Committee received a report that Reclamation received a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), dated August 23, 2022, accepting the LCR MSCP's "Consistency Review for Final Implementation Report, Fiscal Year 2023 Work plan and Budget, Fiscal Year 2021 Accomplishment Report."

The Steering Committee received a report that the Section 7 Consultation to facilitate increased water conservation is moving forward and a response from USFWS is anticipated shortly.

The Southern California Public Power Authority shared with the Steering Committee its intent to exit the LCR MSCP. Member agencies of the Southern California Public Power Authority currently participate in the LCR MSCP through contributions to the Southern California Public Power Authority and intend to request participation in the LCR MSCP as individual agencies. This is the first permittee to exit the program. Details of the transition are being considered and are expected to proceed smoothly.

The next meeting of the LCR MSCP will be a Financial Work Group Meeting, to be held as a hybrid meeting on February 16, 2023.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Department of Interior Notice of Intent to Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

On October 28, 2022, the Department of Interior published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the December 2007 Record of Decision Entitled Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The NOI includes proposed alternatives to revise the December 2007 Record of Decision associated with the Colorado River Interim Guidelines. The 2007 Interim Guidelines provide operating criteria for Lake Powell and Lake Mead, including provisions designed to provide a greater degree of certainty to water users about timing and volumes of potential water delivery reductions for the Lower Basin States, and additional operating flexibility to conserve and store water in the system. The NOI outlines that, in order to ensure that Glen Canyon Dam continues to operate under its intended design, Reclamation may need to modify current operations and reduce annual Glen Canyon Dam downstream releases, thereby impacting downstream riparian areas and reservoir elevations at Lake Mead. Additionally, in order to protect Hoover Dam operations, system integrity, and public health and safety, Reclamation may need to also modify current operations, potentially including additional water use reductions for the three Lake Mead shortage tiers, and reduce annual Hoover Dam downstream releases.

<https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-department-initiates-significant-action-protect-colorado-river-system>

Supreme Court will reconsider Navajos' claim for more water from the Colorado River

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to consider a dispute between the Navajo Nation and state and federal governments over the Tribe's claim for an annual Colorado River water supply. The Court agreed on November 4th, 2022, to review a 9th Circuit Court decision that held the Navajo Nation has a right to take more water from the Colorado River. The question presented by the Tribe is whether, given the United States' promise to provide the Navajo Nation sufficient water by entering into the treaties establishing the Navajo Reservation, coupled with the government's nearly exclusive statutory and regulatory control over the Colorado River, the United States has a fiduciary responsibility to the Navajo Nation to assess the Nation's water needs and develop a plan to meet them. The federal government and the states of Arizona, Colorado and Nevada argued in an October filing that the river's water is not an explicitly enumerated responsibility of the government regarding reservations. The case law "has made clear that Indian tribes may sue

to enforce only those trust responsibilities that the United States has ‘expressly accept[ed],’” they wrote.

Washington, D.C. Report

Inflation Reduction Act Implementation

On October 12th, the Department of the Interior (DOI) announced a funding opportunity through the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$4 billion for water management and conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin and other areas experiencing similar levels of drought.

The announcement included the creation of the Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program, which is currently accepting system conservation proposals for funding. Proposals must create wet water in Lake Mead and will be funded at a set price of:

- \$330 per acre-foot for one-year agreements
- \$365 per acre-foot for two-year agreements
- \$400 per acre-foot for three-year agreements

The DOI will also solicit longer-term durable system efficiency projects in 2023. Longer-term projects may include canal lining, re-regulating reservoirs, ornamental and non-functional turf removal, salinity projects and other infrastructure. Projects may also be related to aquatic ecosystem restoration and impacts mitigation, crop water efficiency, rotational fallowing, and marginal land idling. Applications for funding under the two water conservation programs will be accepted by Reclamation through November 21st.

Arizona U.S. Senator Mark Kelly’s Letter to the Department of the Interior

On October 25th, Senator Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat facing reelection, wrote a [letter](#) urging the DOI to outline actions it can take to compel a basinwide agreement that ensures the stability of the Colorado River system. Mr. Kelly also called on DOI to withhold money for Salton Sea drought mitigation until California agrees to use less of its share of the river and examine water losses in California due to evaporation and the state’s reliance on surplus water credits to meet its conservation goals.

“I encourage the Department to outline scenarios for mandatory reductions, including accounting for evaporation losses from Colorado River contractors in California and strengthening limitations on California’s withdrawal of surplus water that it banks in Lake Mead. Additionally, I call on the Department to withhold federal funding for Salton Sea drought mitigation until California commits additional water for long-term conservation,” wrote Kelly.

In the letter, Kelly also blamed Reclamation for not being clear about when and how it will act if the seven Western states that rely on the river fail to significantly lower their use.

Bureau of Reclamation Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Quarterly Update

The Bureau of Reclamation is hosting two information sessions on its implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The content of the two updates will be identical:

TRIBES, Thursday, November 10th, 11 a.m. eastern

[Click here to join the meeting](#) or join by phone 1-202-640-1187 and **enter passcode 369 454 272#**

STAKEHOLDERS, Thursday, November 10th, 2 p.m. eastern:

[Click here to join the meeting](#) or join by phone 1-202-640-1187 and **enter passcode, 332 792 752#**
