

Minutes of Meeting  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  
Wednesday, January 11, 2023

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (Board) was held on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, at the Sheraton Ontario Airport Hotel, 429 North Vineyard Avenue, Ontario, California 91764.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

David De Jesus (MWD Alternate)  
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)  
John B. Hamby (IID)  
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)  
Jim Madaffer (SDCWA)

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

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Gary Croucher (SDCWA Alternate)  
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)  
James Hanks (IID Alternate)

Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)  
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)

Others Present:

Steve Abbott  
Robert Cheng  
Gloria Cordero  
Dennis Davis  
Gina Dockstader  
JR Echard  
Chris Harris  
Michael Hughes  
Ned Hyduke  
Rich Juricich  
Eric Katz  
Kit San Lai  
Laura Lamdin

Tom Levy  
Aaron Mead  
Jessica Neuwerth  
Shana Rapoport  
Angela Rashid  
David Rheinheimer  
Brad Robinson  
Tom Ryan  
Alexi Schnell  
Tina Shields  
Petya Vasileva  
Margaret Vick  
Jerry Zimmerman

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nelson announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:02 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.

Ms. Tina Shields, representing the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) took the opportunity to introduce IID's new Board Member Ms. Gina Dockstader, noting that she will also serve as an alternate on the Colorado River Board, once she is approved by the Governor of California.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Chairman Nelson moved on to the next item on the agenda which was the Election of Board Officers (Chairman and Vice Chairman) of the Colorado River Board of California (Board). Chairman Nelson stated that he was longer able to serve as Chairman and expressed appreciation for the support he has received over the last four years. Executive Director Harris expressed gratitude for Chairman Nelson's great service to the Board during the challenging times on the Colorado River during the Chairman's tenure.

Chairman Nelson asked for nominations for Chairman for the Board. Mr. Fisher nominated Mr. J.B Hamby, representing the Imperial Irrigation District, as Chairman of the Board. Vice Chairman Pettijohn nominated Mr. Jim Madaffer, representing the San Diego County Water Authority. Mr. Hamby and Mr. Madaffer both provided comments about their experience with their respective agencies and the Colorado River Basin before the vote commenced. The roll call vote for Mr. Hamby was as follows: Mr. Nelson-Yes, Mr. Hamby-Yes, Mr. Peterson-Yes, Mr. Fisher-Yes, Ms. Jones and Mr. Vigil abstained. The roll call vote for Mr. Madaffer was as follows: Mr. Pettijohn-Yes, Mr. Madaffer-Yes, Ms. Jones and Mr. Vigil abstained. Neither nominee received a majority of the vote from the Board members.

Chairman Nelson called for a second vote. The roll call vote for Mr. Hamby was as follows: Mr. Nelson-Yes, Mr. Hamby-Yes, Mr. Peterson-Yes, Mr. Fisher-Yes, Ms. Jones and Mr. Vigil abstained. The roll call vote for Mr. Madaffer was as follows: Mr. Pettijohn-Yes, Mr. Madaffer-Yes, Ms. Jones and Mr. Vigil abstained. For the second vote, neither nominee received a majority of the vote from the Board members.

Board member Hamby suggested holding the vote for Vice Chairman first. Chairman Nelson asked for recess and the Board took a recess at 10:17 a.m.

The Board resumed the regular session at 10:33 a.m. Chairman Nelson asked for nominations for Vice Chairman. Mr. Hamby nominated Mr. Madaffer. No other nominations were submitted. The roll call vote was as follows: Mr. Nelson-Yes, Mr. Hamby-Yes, Mr. Pettijohn-Yes, Mr. Peterson-Yes, Mr. Fisher-Yes, Mr. Madaffer-Yes, Ms. Jones and Mr. Vigil abstained. Mr. Madaffer received a majority vote and was elected Vice Chairman for the Colorado River Board of California.

Mr. Madaffer nominated Mr. Hamby as Chairman. No other nominations were submitted. The roll call vote was as follows: Mr. Nelson-Yes, Mr. Hamby-Yes, Mr. Pettijohn-Yes, Mr. Peterson-Yes, Mr. Fisher-Yes, Mr. Madaffer-Yes, Ms. Jones and Mr. Vigil abstained. Mr. Hamby received a majority vote and was elected Chairman of the Colorado River Board of California.

Chairman Nelson congratulated the newly elected Chair and Vice Chairman. Various Board members thanked out-going Chairman Nelson and Vice Chairman Pettijohn for their service to the Board.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORTS**

### **Colorado River Basin Report**

Mr. Juricich reported that as of January 9<sup>th</sup>, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,524.62 feet with 5.52 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 24% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,045.11 feet with 7.33 MAF of storage, or 28% of capacity. The total system storage was 19.07 MAF, or 33% of capacity, which is 2.94 MAF less than system storage at this time last year.

Mr. Juricich reported that as of January 5<sup>th</sup>, for Water Year-2023 (WY-2023), the observed December inflow to Lake Powell was 0.28 MAF, or 88% of normal. The January inflow forecast to Lake Powell is 0.28 MAF, or 83% of normal. Mr. Juricich reported that water supply conditions in the Colorado River Basin have been improving and the forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell is 9.50 MAF, or 99% of normal. He reported that the forecasted April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 6.70 MAF, or 105% of normal. He added that similar conditions were seen this time last year and storm activity ceased for the first few months of 2022.

Mr. Juricich reported on snow water equivalent (SWE) conditions throughout the Colorado River Basin, noting that SWE conditions in Utah were above 150% of median. He reported that throughout most of the Basin, WY-2023 precipitation conditions range from normal to above normal.

Mr. Juricich reported on the December 24-Month Study. He stated that the most probable release for Lake Powell is 7.0 MAF in WY-2023 and 8.01 MAF in WY-2024, noting that the projected releases do not help improve Lake Mead's elevation. Mr. Juricich reported that Lake Mead's elevation is projected to drop to 1,025 feet by the end of this calendar year.

Mr. Juricich reported that through the end of December the Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs captured 115,281 AF and 79,490 AF, respectively. He also reported that the excess deliveries to Mexico were 8,983 AF, compared to 28,855 AF this time last year. Finally, the total amount of saline drainage water bypassed to the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico was 142,127 AF.

### **State and Local Report**

Ms. Jones, representing the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that the WY-2023 precipitation conditions are above average in the central region of California, south of Oroville and Shasta reservoirs. She added that precipitation conditions along the State Water Project and Federal Central Valley Project have not fared as well. She reported that there have been flooding issues along the San Lorenzo River by Santa Cruz due to recent storms.

Ms. Jones reported that the current Statewide snowpack is 199% of normal and 85% of the April 1<sup>st</sup> snowpack, which is considered the maximum accumulation of snowpack. She added that she has been talking to media outlets explaining that the drought is not over because the reservoir storage has not recovered yet. She stated that statewide reservoir storage has improved over the past few weeks due to storm activity, but the storage in the larger reservoirs, Shasta and Oroville, has not recovered yet because they were not in the path of the storms. She noted that Folsom Lake reservoir has been making flood releases, noting that the watershed is flashy in nature, and it has also been in the path of the most recent storms. She noted that the Don Pedro and New Melones reservoirs were heavily taxed last year to meet Bay Delta flows because Oroville and Shasta's elevations have been low.

Chairman Nelson asked whether there was enough flow from the San Joaquin River to allow the pump into San Luis reservoir to operate at maximum level and whether it will affect pumping into the State Water Project. Ms. Jones responded that reservoir storage for the state

and federal projects does not temporally match the hydrology as closely as it does for some of the other reservoirs, adding that those reservoirs have to provide basic flows for the Bay Delta and instream flows, but have not had to due to the above average precipitation. Ms. Jones explained that another constraint on the operation of the pumps in the Delta is the location of the smelt. She stated that due to current conditions, more water will be able to be moved through the Delta.

Ms. Jones reported that the Sacramento River is a wetter river than the Colorado River in terms of average annual flows, adding that during wet years, a lot of the flow of the Sacramento River is diverted into the dual bypass system to take out of the channel and diminish flood risks. Ms. Jones displayed a graphic showing the observed and forecasted flow along the Sacramento weir, which is part of the bypass system. She explained that while other weirs in the system are overflowing, the Sacramento weir is not overflowing and has not overflowed since 2017.

Responding to a question about the status of the Yolo Bypass, Ms. Jones explained that some refer to the entire system as the Yolo Bypass and others call the Sacramento Bypass the upper bypass system on the Sacramento River, while the Yolo Bypass is considered the lower bypass. She stated that there is water in the Yolo Bypass which has been contributed from the weirs that are higher up in the system. She added that there are some bypasses on the San Joaquin River, which is in a high flood risk situation due to its limited channel capacity. She noted that there are very minor opportunities to divert water out of the system, but nothing on the scale and magnitude of the Sacramento River.

Ms. Jones presented results of an experimental forecast from Scripps that DWR funded to provide the probability of atmospheric rivers (ARs). She explained that the forecast is out to 16 days, but most of the scale is 7 to 10 days. She stated that the forecast shows that California is expected to experience more atmospheric rivers in the next week or so, adding that after this timeframe the forecast is limited because weather models do not operate at that scale. She stated that the forecast is run several times a day and shows the probability of integrated water vapor transport, which is how much water is moving through the atmosphere. She noted that the results show 250 kg/ms of water vapor, which is the minimum threshold for an atmospheric river, adding that the model can also forecast 500 kg/ms and 750 kg/ms. She stated that a 500 kg/ms AR would be very, very wet. She explained that the duration of the AR is an important factor when considering overall AR volume. Board member Fisher asked whether the forecasted AR would produce enough water to assist Shasta and Oroville reservoirs. Ms. Jones stated that the AR would assist the reservoirs but emphasized that both reservoirs have a lot of space to fill. Ms. Jones reported that there are several smaller reservoirs that have been spilling to create

flood control space, noting that Folsom Lake has been conducting flood control releases for more than a week and a half.

Board member Madaffer inquired about amount of precipitation that would be needed to slow down drought conditions in the Colorado River Basin. Ms. Jones stated that drought is defined as impact based. As an example, she explained that if a small system relies mostly on runoff, rather than storage, then the system is particularly susceptible to wet or dry winter conditions. She stated that the Colorado River Basin is similar to groundwater basins in California in the sense that it has massive storage and the storage has been greatly depleted during the more than 20 years of drought in the Colorado River Basin. She stated that the Basin is on a good path to having a good water year, but the good precipitation conditions will not recover the long-term depletion of storage. She stated that the overall, conditions have been so dry that storage continues to decline and climate change and the warming atmosphere have also decreased runoff efficiency. Ms. Jones stated that last year the Basin had near normal precipitation but had below average runoff.

Ms. Jones explained further that under the current Interim Guidelines, triggers for shortages that are tied to reservoir elevations, so to come out of a shortage condition in the Basin would require enough runoff above those trigger elevations, which will be difficult to attain over the next few years. She stated the Basin may need about five consistent years or more of very wet conditions to improve reservoir storage. Executive Director Harris added that reduction of demands would also be necessary to help improve Lake Powell's reservoir storage and reestablish balancing between Lake Powell and Lake Mead to start rebuilding storage in Lake Mead. Board member Madaffer stated that this message needs to be pushed to the media, adding that the public sees spills from Folsom Reservoir and believes that drought is over. He stated that it is important for all of our member agencies to understand that although there has been a lot of precipitation, the Colorado River Basin is still in a bad situation. Ms. Jones reported that she reminds the media of these facts, but many have forgotten what a wet winter looks like. She added that in California, there would need to be quite a few wet years to come close to recovering the 10 years of storage that was lost.

Board member Fisher remarked that Ms. Jones' discussion highlights the relative difference of storage along the Colorado River and State Water Project, adding that several Lake Shasta's could fit into Lake Mead. He stated it has taken a long time for the Colorado River Basin to deplete its reservoirs and it will take a long time to refill them.

Ms. Jones stated that the California drought that occurred in 2017 was a wet year throughout the state except for the central coast. She stated that Santa Barbara was forced to

do emergency pumping at Lake Cachuma until 2019 because the area was not in the path of many of the storms that occurred in 2017. Similarly, Ms. Jones stated that in some years, not all the regions in the Upper Colorado River Basin benefit from wet conditions, such as the San Juan Basin.

Chairman Nelson remarked that if there continue to be average releases of 7.5 MAF releases from Lake Powell over ten years, and demands remain at 9.0 MAF in the Lower Basin, the system will be in deficit.

Board member Peterson, representing The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) reported that as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, total reservoir capacity is 66%. He stated that the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) is on a 5-pump flow and that the CRA is closing down in February for about twenty days for repairs. He stated that MWD has had success closing down the CRA in February to make repairs over the last ten years. Mr. Peterson reported that water consumption in MWD's service area is declining due to storm activity over the last two months.

Vice Chairman Pettijohn, representing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), reported that current precipitation conditions are above the normal April 1<sup>st</sup> level and tracking closely with the wettest year in history, which was 2016-2017. He added that it is a good start to the water year but cautioned that above normal snowpack may not translate into normal runoff conditions. Mr. Harris inquired about LADWP's contingency plan for storing water if the water year continues to track as the wettest year in history. Mr. Pettijohn responded that currently LADWP has options that it can explore but is not planning on doing anything abnormal.

### **Colorado River Basin States Activities**

#### *Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the December 2007 Record of Decision*

Mr. Harris provided an update to the Board on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation public process for the 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 public comment period closed on December 20, 202. The Board and several of the Board member agencies provided comments to Reclamation. Mr. Harris reported that following discussions at the Colorado River Water Users Association in December held in Las Vegas, Nevada, the Seven Basin States Principals, and technical staff continue to meet in an attempt to develop a Seven States consensus-based framework alternative to provide to Reclamation for inclusion in the SEIS. The States continue to meet with the expectation of developing a consensus alternative by the end of January.

Mr. Fisher asked if Reclamation would use the SEIS process to go beyond 2026. Mr. Harris responded that Reclamation has not indicated it would but highlighted that if something were adopted and implemented and it worked well, that maybe it slips into the post-2026 landscape.

Mr. Fisher responded that the states need to come to an agreement on a consensus proposal. Mr. Harris responded that the states do need to come to an agreement by the end of January. A draft EIS is due out by early April because Reclamation wants to have the final EIS and a record of decision by mid-summer.

Mr. Fisher stated the SEIS will have three alternatives. A No-Action alternative, which already has a lot of action like the DCP; A State's Consensus; and a Reclamation proposal. The No Action and the Reclamation proposals will follow the Law of the River, while the other states want to toss all that out. California may be better off with the federal alternative.

Mr. Harris didn't disagree with the assessment. Mr. Harris indicated that the tribes and academics may come in with alternatives.

Mr. Fisher stated that at the end of the day the other states want California to give up its apportionment, but that the other states need California to agree to a voluntary reduction. Otherwise, the states are bound by the Law of the River. Mr. Harris agreed.

Mr. Pettijohn stated that if California sticks strictly to the Law of the River, the urban users in Southern California would be in a very bad situation.

Mr. Fisher responded that California could work with its users to adjust to reduced deliveries.

Mr. Hamby stated that California urban uses would only be impacted after other states had been drastically reduced.

Mr. Harris stated that the priority system works to the benefit where California agencies can effectively backstop each other. Mr. Harris stated that other states are reacting negatively to California, but California is the only state that has put water on the table. Arizona has the ability to develop a Quantification Settlement Agreement the way California did.

Mr. Madaffer stated that the QSA is a model for the entire basin. He added that there may be value in creating a Colorado River Basin Commission that could help coordinate and oversee actions on a basinwide scale. He stated that it would be helpful for the Board staff to explain the role of such a commission and how it could help the Basin States.

Mr. Harris agreed that the landscape level issues should be discussed over the next couple of years as the Basin starts on the next framework.

## **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES**

### **Washington, DC Updates**

#### *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)*

Mr. Harris reported that WRDA was signed into law by President Biden on December 23, 2022.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Nelson adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.