Colorado River Board of California

MONTHLY REPORT TO THE COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

March 15, 2023

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS REPORT

As of March 13th, the surface water elevation of Lake Powell was 3,520.47 feet with nearly 5.20 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 23% of capacity. The surface water elevation of Lake Mead was 1,046.06 feet with 7.40 MAF of storage, or 28% of capacity. As of March 12th, the total System storge was 18.81 MAF, or 32% of capacity, which is about 2.46 MAF less than the total System storage at this time last year.

As of March 8th, storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs, excluding Lake Powell, included the following volumes: 40% of capacity at Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming; 67% of capacity at Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Wyoming and Utah; 93% of capacity at Morrow Point and 36% of capacity at Blue Mesa Reservoir in Colorado; and 51% of capacity at Navajo Reservoir in New Mexico.

As of March 3rd, the February observed inflow into Lake Powell was 0.27 MAF (74% of normal) and the March forecasted inflow is 0.45 MAF (75% of normal). The forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell for Water Year (WY) 2023 is 10.87 MAF (113% of normal). The April through July 2023 unregulated inflow into Lake Powell is 8.0 MAF (125% of normal).

Colorado Basin River Forecast Center Webinar

On March 7th, the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) held a webinar to review the current water supply conditions and forecast. CBRFC reviewed the Colorado River Basin's precipitation conditions for February. February started out dry, but by the middle of the month most areas of the Basin experienced increased storm activity. The CBRFC noted that the Basin also experienced colder than normal temperatures and most of the precipitation fell as snow, particularly in the Lower Colorado River Basin.

To date, Water Year-2023 precipitation above Lake Powell is 118% of average. In the Green River Basin, WY-2023 precipitation ranged from 96% in the Yampa/White basin to 133% of average in the Price/San Rafael/Dirty Devil River basin. For the Colorado River headwaters, WY-2023

precipitation conditions range from 66% of average above Kremmling River basin to 103% of average in the Roaring Fork River basin. The WY-2023 precipitation conditions in the Lower Colorado River Basin range from 104% of average in the Upper Gila to 129% in the Virgin River basin of average.

The CBRFC reported on modeled soil moisture conditions for Fall across the Upper Colorado River Basin. Soil moisture conditions have improved since last year. The CBRFC discussed the important role that soil moisture, spring weather and SWE play in the timing and magnitude of spring runoff. In the Lower Colorado River Basin, soil moisture conditions improved in February. The CBRFC noted that in the Lower Colorado River Basin soil moisture conditions are more dynamic through the winter as soil moisture conditions are impacted by rainfall and snow melt that occurs due to warming temperatures.

As of March 1st, snow water equivalent (SWE) was above normal across many areas of the Colorado River Basin. The Upper Colorado River Basin SWE ranged from 99% of average above the Fontenelle River basin to 183% in the Price/San Rafael/Dirty Devil basin. The Lower Colorado River fared much better, with March 1st SWE ranging from 175% of average in the Salt River basin to 486% of average in the Verde River basin.

The March 1st water supply forecasts for April to July runoff volumes for the Upper Colorado River Basin range from 80% to 195% of normal and 125% of normal for Lake Powell. In the Lower Colorado River Basin, which has a runoff period of January to May, runoff volumes range from 125% to 395% of median.

A few more storms are expected to move across the northern region of the Colorado River Basin through March.

The next CBRFC Water Supply Forecast webinar is scheduled for Friday, April 7th. Register for the future webinars at the following link: https://www.cbrfc.noaa.gov/news/wswebinar.html.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM UPDATES

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

The Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) met held a hybrid meeting based in Tempe, AZ on February 15 - 16.

The GCDAMP is currently evaluating the opportunity for a spring high flow experiment (HFE). To rebuild sandbars, the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP) includes triggers for potential spring or fall HFEs based on the estimated sand mass balance resulting from Paria River sediment inputs during the spring and fall accounting periods. The program is currently within the spring accounting window, Dec 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023. Time still remains in the accounting window; however, sand inputs from the Paria River thus far are insufficient to trigger a Spring HFE. HFEs do not result in changes to the monthly or annual release volumes from Glen Canyon Dam.

With the goal of increasing opportunities for future HFEs to better manage sediment resources, the AMWG directed the Technical Work Group (TWG) to consider options for re-evaluating the sediment accounting window in the LTEMP.

As the reservoir level falls, non-native fish, including green sunfish and smallmouth bass, are passing through the dam. Preventing establishment of breeding populations of smallmouth bass below Glen Canyon Dam remains a priority for the GCDAMP. Agencies with the Department of the Interior are in the process of developing an MOU or charter to coordinate future rapid response efforts.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) reported on the ongoing process to select and install a fish exclusion device above Glen Canyon Dam. Through an extensive vetting process, a net and/or curtain barrier has been chosen as the optimal device. Next steps will entail a site visit, engineering design, and working with a contractor. Installation is anticipated in 2024 or 2025.

Reclamation released a Glen Canyon Dam/Smallmouth Bass Flow Options Environmental Assessment that presents four potential operational flow options aimed at preventing smallmouth bass from successfully spawning and establishing downstream of Glen Canyon Dam. Comments were due March 10. California submitted a comment letter co-signed by representatives of the six other basin states. The draft environmental assessment is available online at:
https://www.usbr.gov/uc/DocLibrary/EnvironmentalAssessments/20230200-GCDSmallmouthBassFlowOps_Draft EA_508.pdf.

The AMWG voted to advance a Nonnative Fish Strategic Plan to the Secretary of the Interior. The goal of the plan is to coordinate and oversee smallmouth bass response actions undertaken by federal agencies and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

A representative of the Navajo Nation shared plans for the upcoming year, including the use of ethnographic decision-making and collaboration with other members of the GCDAMP.

Finally, the TWG is scheduled to hold a meeting in Phoenix, AZ on April 12 -13 and the AMWG is scheduled to hold a meeting on May 17.

Status of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) held a Financial Work Group call on February 23. The group discussed the FY-2022 budget, which was $25.4 million. Actual expenditures in FY-2022 were above budget at $27.0 million. Differences between the approved budget and expenditures are in part due to up front purchasing that will reduce expenditures in the future. Federal funding from outside the LCR MSCP was obtained to assist with research regarding the potential installation of a new pipeline from Lake Mead to the Lake Mead Fish Hatchery. Staff turnover resulted in delays of some tasks. These delays are not anticipated to affect the LCR MSCP schedule but did reduce spending for FY-2022. As anticipated, overall spending on research is decreasing as the program matures and the knowledge gaps needed to implement and monitor projects have been addressed. The FY-2023 LCR MSCP annual budget is estimated to be approximately $24.0 million.

The next meeting of the LCR MSCP Steering Committee is scheduled to be held as a hybrid meeting, facilitating in-person and virtual attendance, on April 26, 2023.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Seven Basin States Updates

As water supply and hydrologic conditions have continued to improve, the Upper Basin States have indicated a desire to amend the 2022/2023 Drought Response Operations Plan (Plan) that has been implemented since May 2022. The original Plan was intended to move approximately 500 KAF from Flaming Gorge Reservoir downstream to Lake Powell by the end of April 2023. Because of improved conditions, the Upper Basin States have requested that Reclamation terminate the planned releases from Flaming Gorge that were scheduled for March and April. This would reduce the total Plan release by about 40 KAF, with about 460 KAF having been released to Lake Powell.

Additionally, the Upper Basin States have also indicated a desire to begin initiating recovery of up to the full volume of drought response operations releases over the past two years (i.e., 162

KAF in 2021/2022 and about 460 KAF in 2022/2023). The Upper Basin States have proposed releasing to Lake Mead the 480 KAF that was withheld in the 2022 annual Glen Canyon Dam release (this would result in discontinuing the use of "operational neutrality"). Finally, as Lake Powell is now in the Lower Elevation Balancing Tier (below 3,525' elevation), the Upper Basin States are desirous of continuing to "preserve the benefits" to Lake Powell of both the prior DROA releases and the release of the 480 KAF withheld in 2022 in the context of the determination and implementation of balancing releases between Lakes Powell and Mead during the remainder of Water-Year 2023, which ends on September 30, 2023. The seven states held a webinar on March 10th to discuss these issues in more detail and will discuss further at a subsequent meeting scheduled for March 24th to be held in Phoenix, Arizona. Currently, it appears that continuing the discussions about DROA recovery, recovery of the withheld 480 KAF, and balancing operations will be on the agenda.

State Water Project and Central Valley Project Forecast Delivery Allocations

On February 22, 2023, The Department of Water Resources announced a modest increase in forecasted State Water Project (SWP) deliveries this year due to early gains in the Sierra snowpack. DWR now expects to deliver 35 percent of requested water supplies, up from 30 percent forecasted in January, to the 29 public water agencies that serve 27 million Californians. That would result in delivery of an additional 210,000 acre-feet of water.

On February 22, 2023, Reclamation announced initial 2023 water supply allocations for Central Valley Project (CVP) water users. Water supply allocations are based on an estimate of water available for delivery to CVP water users and reflect current reservoir storage, precipitation, and snowpack in the Sierra Nevada. For the Sacramento River contractors, irrigation water service and repayment contractors north-of-Delta and south-of-Delta are allocated 35% of their contract total. Municipal and industrial water service and repayment contractors north-of-Delta and those serviced by Folsom Reservoir on the American River are allocated 75% of their historic use or public health and safety needs, whichever, is greater. Municipal and industrial water service and repayment contractors south-of-Delta are allocated 75% of their historical use. Eastside water service contractors (Central San Joaquin Water Conservation District and Stockton East Water District) will receive 100% of their contract total. For the Friant Division water supply allocation is 100% of Class 1 users and 20% of Class 2 users. Wildlife refuges will receive 100% of the Level 2 supplies, both north and south of the Delta.

Washington, D.C. Report

Fiscal-Year 2024 Appropriations

President Biden transmitted his fiscal year 2024 (FY-2024) budget to Congress on March 9th. This is roughly a month later than the budget is typically sent to Congress and the Administration points to the fact that the FY-2023 omnibus did not pass until December, which delayed the FY-2024 budget development.

President's Fiscal-Year 2024 Budget Requests $1.4 Billion for Reclamation

The President's Budget requested $1.4 billion for Reclamation including the following key priority elements:

Prioritize Climate Resiliency and Drought Mitigation:

As communities across the Colorado River Basin continue to face the impacts the ongoing drought crisis, the Administration is acting to improve and protect the stability and sustainability of the Colorado River System. The budget proposal includes a $49 million request for the Lower Colorado River Operations Program, including $16.8 million to build on the work of implementing the drought contingency plans. It also includes $2.7 million for the Upper Colorado River Operations Program to support Drought Response Operations and $200.3 million to find long-term, comprehensive water supply solutions for farmers, families, and communities in California. The budget includes $62.9 million for the WaterSMART Program to support Reclamation's collaboration with non-federal partners in efforts to address emerging water demands and water shortage issues in the West.

Prioritize Underserved Communities:

Reclamation's request continues to support racial and economic equity through commitments to underserved communities and Tribal areas. A request of $57.8 million advances the construction and continues the operations and maintenance of authorized rural water projects. The budget request also provides $35.5 million for the Native American Affairs Program, which provides technical support and assistance to tribal governments to develop and manage their water resources.

Address Aging Infrastructure Needs:

Reclamation's dams and reservoirs, water conveyance systems, and power generating facilities continue to represent a primary focus area of organizational operations. The budget includes $210.2 million for the Dam Safety Program to effectively manage risks to the downstream public, of which $182.6 million is for modification actions. Another focus area is $105.3 million requested for extraordinary maintenance activities across Reclamation. This is part of a strategy to improve asset management and deal with aging infrastructure to ensure continued reliable delivery of water and power.

These funding amounts are included in the $1.3 billion budget request for Reclamation's principal operating account (Water and Related Resources), which funds planning, construction, water conservation, efforts to address fish and wildlife habitat needs, and operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation activities at Reclamation facilities.

Additionally, funding of $33 million is requested to implement the California Bay-Delta Program and address California's current water supply and ecological challenges, while $48.5 million is for the Central Valley Project Restoration Fund to protect, restore, and enhance fish, wildlife, and associated habitats in California's Central Valley and Trinity River Basins.

This budget request is complemented by nearly $1.7 billion in funding Reclamation will receive in FY-2024 from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Colorado River Basin Updates

On Monday, February 27th, Congresswoman Napolitano (CA) and Congressman Calvert (CA) hosted a briefing for all California House members on the status of the Colorado River and ongoing negotiations in the Basin. About twenty Capitol Hill staff attended the event, mostly from California offices. Representatives of the Colorado River Board, Imperial Irrigation District, and The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California provided a power-point presentation that described the current status of water supply conditions in the Basin, on-going water conservation activities, Reclamation's proposed development of the SEIS modifying the 2007 Interim Shortage Guidelines, and updates regarding seven Basin States discussions and next steps.

Additionally, representatives of the Board and the agencies conducted a number of meetings on February 27-28 with members and staff of California's congressional delegation and representatives of the Department of Interior's senior leadership team and representatives of the White House's Council for Environmental Quality. The Board's executive director met with

Senator Alex Padilla and his staff, and with a senior staffer from Senator Feinstein's office. The Board's chairman and executive director also met with Reclamation Commissioner Touton and Deputy Commissioner Palumbo and with Deputy Secretary of Interior Tommy Beaudreau. All of these meetings were generally focused on improving the effectiveness of the seven Basin States process, emphasizing continued commitment to development of durable plans and activities to stabilize the reservoir system in the interim period, including the timely completion of the SEIS.

Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee Hearing

The Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee held a hearing on March 8th, on "Benefits and Access: The Necessity for Multiple Use of Water Resources." Chair Cliff Bentz (R-OR) helmed a wide-ranging session on water policy, including hydropower permitting, agriculture needs, tribal rights and saltwater fishing.

Lawmakers discussed impacts of reduced water allocations to agricultural users — including in California, where farmers reliant on federal water projects saw cuts to their allocations in recent years — as well as the costs of new infrastructure projects like reservoirs and desalination.

Rep. Bentz raised the possibility of valuing the cost of water used to support endangered species or in-stream flows in drought-impacted states. "I think it's time we put a number on the amount we're spending on the water allocated in-stream," he said.

California Rep. Jared Huffman (CA), the subcommittee's top Democrat, warned against setting environmental demands for water against those flows needed by agriculture and municipalities. Dan Keppen, executive director of the Family Farm Alliance, told the panel that drought policies can be structured to support a range of needs. "It's possible to develop water solutions that reconcile the needs of waterfowl and fisheries in a way that multiple species can thrive in harmony," Keppen said. "Solutions can be reached that address the true stressors on fish that doesn't take away water supplies from farmers and ranchers."

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