

Minutes of Meeting
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, April 10, 2024

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (Board) was held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California facility, 2325 Searl Parkway, Hemet, CA 92545.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

David De Jesus (MWD Alternate)	Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)
Gina Dockstader (IID Alternate)	Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)	Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)	Frank Ruiz (Public Member)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Gloria Cordero (MWD)	Peter Nelson (CVWD)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)	Jack Seiler (PVID Alternate)
Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)	David Vigil (DFW Alternate)
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)	

Others Present:

Steven Abbott	Jessica Neuwerth
Nick Bahr	Alexi Schnell
Dennis Davis	David Rheinheimer
JR Echard	Brad Robinson
Adel Hagekhalil	Jason Rollo
Christopher Harris	Shanti Rosset
Ned Hyduke	Carrie Scott
Laura Lamdin	Gary Tavetian
Aaron Mead	Joseph Vanderhorst
Martin Miller	Petya Vasileva
Travis Moore	Meena Westford
Yuanyuan Myint	Greg Widman
	Jerry Zimmerman

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Chairman Hamby thanked the staff who helped organizing for the tour.

WELCOME FROM METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Adel Hagekhalil, General Manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for their partnership and leadership. Mr. Hagekhalil noted that California is united because we support each other. When Mr. Hagekhalil and Chairman Hamby went to Washington D.C. advocating for the post-2026 guidelines, they conveyed the message about what California has done to conserve, and how California needs the Upper Basin to share in reductions.

Mr. Hagekhalil suggested the Board host a reception at the upcoming Association of California Water Agencies conference to show the unity in California as well as what California is doing, including the success of conservation and investments related to the Colorado River since 2003. Mr. Hagekhalil stated that the investment in the Colorado River benefits the entire State and the entire southwest. Mr. Hagekhalil stated that our job is to ensure safe and reliable water for all with no one left behind.

Chairman Hamby thanked Mr. Hagekhalil and called Vice Chairman Madaffer for an update. Vice Chairman Madaffer welcomed Meena Westford's return to San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) as new Director of Strategic Initiatives. Vice Chairman Madaffer noted that Ms. Westford first joined SDCWA in 2008 after a seventeen-year career at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and did water resource management in southern California. Ms. Westford later joined MWD in 2012. Ms. Westford will be reporting to SDCWA's new General Manager, Dan Denham.

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Chairman Hamby invited members of the audience to address the Board on items on the agenda or matters related to the Board. Hearing none, he moved on to the next item on the agenda.

ADMINISTRATION

February 14, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the February 14, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Member Fisher moved that the minutes to be approved, second by Vice Chairman Madaffer. By roll-call vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Discussion of FY 24/25 Priorities and Projects

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an update on the results of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB) stakeholder survey. Suggestions from the initial responses include but are not limited to 1) clarify the role of the Board and the role of staff, 2) more communication between the Board and staff on goals and priorities, 3) strategic planning to set and advance goals, and 4) clearer messaging and greater visibility of the Board such as more focus on outreach and public relations and more interactive meetings. Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that information from the survey will help staff prepare draft budgets for the CRB, Six Agency Committee (SAC) and Colorado River Authority (CRA) that will be presented in May 2024.

Member Fisher asked how many people were requested to fill out the survey and how many responses were received. Deputy Director Neuwerth responded that the survey was sent to about 200 people and about 12 of them responded so far and results were still being collected. Member Fisher asked if the survey was anonymous. Deputy Director Neuwerth confirmed and asked everyone to participate.

Deputy Director Neuwerth asked the Board for input on priorities and projects for the fiscal year 2024-2025. The first discussion considered what the priorities the Board would like to focus on in the coming year. Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that the priorities could be internal to the Board (e.g., strategic planning effort, board events, etc.) or external (e.g., intra- or inter-state agreement, etc.). The second discussion related to projects or research efforts the Board would like to see undertaken.

Chairman Hamby would like to see more robust public education, public outreach, and media coordination. Chairman Hamby suggested exploring creation of a Public Information Officer position at CRB. The role could focus on external and internal communications to tell California's story and coordinate with the internal and external affairs groups of member agencies and to create a plan of engagement that is monitored throughout the year.

Vice Chairman Madaffer agreed with Chairman Hamby and stated that, despite being the largest stakeholder in the Colorado River, California and its accomplishments are often overlooked. Chairman Madaffer added that there is a good story to tell, including California's

agricultural conservation and agriculture to urban transfers. Vice Chairman Madaffer stated that he would like to work with CRB staff to review the CRB organizational chart and budget. Vice Chairman Madaffer reiterated the need to improve California's visibility of Colorado River issues and would like to see improvement in CRB outreach.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that it would be helpful to establish an outreach plan that not only includes the Board, but also integrates all of the agencies.

Member Ruiz indicated that many agencies of the Board have implemented various water conservation programs such as urban water conservation programs and turf replacement projects. Member Ruiz added that since there was not a platform to tell California's story, the public were not aware of what we were doing. Member Ruiz suggested a communication approach that integrates agricultural and urban efforts and also discusses climate change. Member Ruiz suggested bringing all agencies together to create a single approach to represent California in a coordinated manner.

Member De Jesus indicated that it was important to have something to leave behind that doesn't have intense detail but may include a QR code that leads to different websites and resources for the public for explore.

Member Jones shared that the California Governor Gavin Newsom announced today that he has asked Karla Nemeth, Director of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to serve as an advisor on the Administration's key water priorities and to lead implementation of key water projects to achieve the Governor's water supply strategy. One of the projects listed was stabilizing Colorado River supplies. Member Jones shared that Director Nemeth will continue to serve as Director of DWR as she takes on this role and has already been thinking about a communications plan.

Member Fisher stated that a lot of the media that publish Colorado River stories are headquartered in Denver and pick up the Upper Basin perspective. Member Fisher stated that the Board's primary responsibility is to reflect the best interests of the four Section 5 contractors and the citizens of California. Member Fisher acknowledged that public outreach has been dormant for the past five years and suggested that, the Colorado River Authority may be a more appropriate vehicle for public outreach rather than hiring a Public Information Officer within CRB.

Chairman Hamby noted other states and other State departments have Public Information Office positions. Chairman Hamby stated that it sounds like there is a shared goal in improving our ability to tell a clear, coherent, cohesive, and consistent story and that we need to find the best options to carry that out.

Member Fisher stated a preference for keeping our heads down, adding that the right stance in negotiations is more important than public messaging. Member Fisher stated that the CRB is responsible to the State government and to the Resources Secretary.

Mr. Hagekhalil stated that it was important that the Board and the Board staff have the resources and toolbox to be able to use when needed. He stated that there are many ways to achieve the goal. Mr. Hagekhalil pointed out that CRB may not need to hire a full-time public relations person. Mr. Hagekhalil suggested other options: hiring a contractor to conduct public relations or creating a partnership among member agencies.

Member Fisher reiterated that the Colorado River Authority was established to do public outreach and is available as a tool.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that hearing the discussion, there was a strong interest from the Board in more coordination and more intentional communications. She stated that there were many ways to achieve the goal. Deputy Director Neuwerth suggested that CRB staff could investigate different options and present them to the Board in the future.

Member Jones requested that CRB's statute be reviewed at a future meeting, noting that the statute describes CRB's mandate as protecting the rights and interests of the State, agencies, and citizens, and not just the interests of Section 5 contractors. Member Jones added that this was the reason the Colorado River was included in key water projects in the Governor's recent announcement. Member Jones added that CRB has been funded by the State in the past and if the Board wants to expand certain efforts, we could ask for State funds through the State Budget process in the future.

Vice Chairman Madaffer agreed with Member Jones' comments and stated that he looks forward to the staff coming back with options for expanded public outreach. Vice Chairman Madaffer added that there is nothing in the charter prohibiting us from partnering with MWD or the Resources department.

Member De Jesus stated that it would be beneficial to understand the scope of the Colorado River Authority to determine if we could use it to get out the message and achieve our goals.

Deputy Director Neuwerth agreed that it would be good to understand the scope and responsibility of the CRB compared to Colorado River Authority.

Member Fisher inquired regarding the structure of the Colorado River Authority.

Chairman Hamby stated that it was a Joint Power Authority, which was largely formed for lobbying purpose.

Chairman Hamby suggested a future conversation regarding the role of the CRB as well as the Colorado River Authority and the Six Agencies Committee.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that an overview of CRB will be included in the May 2024 meeting agenda.

Member Madaffer suggested having a Board retreat.

Chairman Hamby asked Jerry Zimmerman, CRB's consultant, about the past retreats. Mr. Zimmerman responded that the Board historically did have retreats, which were focused on a particular issue at that point in time. Retreats often included presentations by agency staff, the Board staff, and other invited participants.

Chairman Hamby stated that the Board has discussed communications, Public Information Officer consideration, strategic planning. Chairman Hamby asked if there were any other discussions the Board would like to comment on. Hearing none, he moved on to the next item on the agenda.

LOCAL AND STATE WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORTS

Member Jones, representing DWR, reported that California's water year precipitation was 107% of average. She added that reservoir storage is above average, partly due to some carryover storage from last winter's statewide snowpack.

Member Jones reported that the statewide snowpack is 111% of normal and 110% of the April 1st average. She stated that runoff forecasts for major rivers basins in California are about 95% to 105% of average. She added that having average conditions in California is a rarity because the state experiences one extreme or the other. She stated that in Water Year 2023 (WY-2023), California had a very wet extreme and if you look back at the last twenty to thirty years of record the State has been significantly dry more often than not.

Member De Jesus, representing MWD, reported that MWD's combined reservoir storage as of April 1st is 88% of capacity. He reported that the Colorado River aqueduct annual maintenance is complete, and the aqueduct is on a 4-pump flow but will quickly ramp up to a seven-pump flow by the end of the year. The 2024 diversion target is 974,000 AF as of April 1st,

and MWD has diverted a little more than 100,000-acre feet (AF). He noted that information for water deliveries for January and February is not available, adding that the 2024 delivery target for the Desert Water Agency in Coachella Valley water district is 136,000 AF.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported on precipitation conditions in the Eastern Sierra. She reported that conditions in the Eastern Sierra were slightly above average (104% of normal).

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that as of April 1st, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,559.02 feet with 7.72 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 33% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,075.35 feet with 9.63 MAF of storage, or 37% of capacity. The total system storage was 24.61 MAF, or 42% of capacity, which is 5.59 MAF more than system storage at this time last year.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that as of March 18th, the WY-2024 forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell is 8.08 MAF, or 84% of normal. She reported that the forecasted April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 5.4 MAF, or 85% of normal. She stated that observed inflow into Lake Powell for February was 95% of normal and the March inflow forecast was 80% of normal. She reported that WY-2024 precipitation to date is 106% of normal and the current Basin snowpack was 113% of normal.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported on basin-wide precipitation conditions, noting that conditions in February and March were above average throughout the Basin. She added that SNOTEL gages above Lake Powell reported 110% of median.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported on January and March 24-Month projections for Lakes Powell and Mead. She stated that the most probable release tier for Lake Powell for WY-2024 is the Mid-Elevation and in WY-2025 the most probable release tier is the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that through the end of March, the Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs captured 19,049 AF and 21,598 AF respectively. She also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 13,921 AF, compared to 14,537 AF at this time last year. Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that saline drainage bypass to the Cienga de Santa Clara is currently about 37,720 AF.

MEMBER AGENCY REPORTS

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Vice Chairman Madaffer noted that Reclamation released its final Environmental Impact Statement to amend the 2007 Interim Guidelines, that the Lower Basin will be providing 3 million acre-feet (of conservation) through 2026, and that SDCWA has already pledged 50,000 acre-feet from its Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) supplies. He further noted that more agreements are needed for 2024 through 2026. Vice Chairman Madaffer expressed hope that Reclamation will continue to find federal money to support this.

He further reported that Senator Eddie Garcia introduced a bill (Senate Bill 2610) that would extend QSA-related environmental protections to a new system conservation agreement for 2024 through 2026. Chairman Hamby noted that a hearing on the bill was held yesterday and that the bill passed out of committee. Vice Chairman Madaffer emphasized the importance of CRB supporting that bill.

Vice Chairman Madaffer then noted the importance of freeing up more Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. He also emphasized the importance of MWD General Manager Adel Hagekhalil and CRB Chairman Hamby visiting legislative leaders last month.

Vice Chairman Madaffer closed by noting that SDCWA wants to do everything they can to continue partnering with others to help achieve the noted goals.

California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Member Jones began by recognizing that April 1st is the date California uses as the peak of statewide snowpack accumulation and showing and commenting on a historical photo of a snow survey from May 1958.

Member Jones then indicated she wanted to focus on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), noting that the tenth anniversary of the enactment of SGMA will be later this year. She commented generally on SGMA, noting in particular how development and implementation of Groundwater Sustainability Areas (GSAs) and their required reporting have gone unexpectedly smoothly. She noted that all of the plans for the critically over drafted basins have now been reviewed, and that many of those for the second batch that were due at the end of 2022 have been reviewed. She noted that so far only a handful have been referred to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for corrective action. She also noted that the assistance of several hundred million dollars of state funding helped. Member Jones closed by noting that later this month the SWRCB will have its first hearing to potentially place one of the plan areas on probation.

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Member Dockstader reported that IID held a New River Wetlands clean-up with the help of the thirty sailors from the Naval Air Station in El Centro, CA.

Chairman Hamby provided background to Member Dockstader's report, adding that approximately twenty years ago Congressman Duncan Hunter worked with some local conservationists for hunting and other purposes as well as other state and local agencies to develop many dozens of acres of wetlands and to run the polluted New and Alamo River water through the wetlands, providing habitat, and improving water quality.

Chairman Hamby reported that the developed wetlands reduced nitrogen by 49%, phosphorus by 42%, fecal coliform from the New River traveling up from Mexico by 98%, and other suspended sediment by 92%. Chairman Hamby added that people do bird watching and hunting and that it has been a community asset as well for school children - they hatch duck eggs and then release the ducklings to the wetlands. Chairman Hamby reported that the wetlands Member Dockstader mentioned that these were the same wetlands developed by Congressman Hunter and his collaborators.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)

Member De Jesus reported that the MWD Board approved its new two-year budget.

Member De Jesus stated that the budget decision followed two months of discussion, including more than twenty workshops and public meetings and countless telephone calls from the general manager and his staff.

Member De Jesus stated that passing the budget was no easy decision and is a transitional budget that required a lot of compromises. Member De Jesus stated that it represents a strong financial commitment to meet the many challenges that MWD faces to ensure safe and reliable water for Southern California.

Member De Jesus stated that the proposed budget is a realistic one that assumes lower water sales, a contentious issue, to ensure that MWD saw it from a more reasonable conservative perspective in order to preserve what little reserves are left. Member De Jesus added that thanks to conservation and storage, that will continue.

Member De Jesus reported that the budget holds the line on expenditures, continues conservation funding, includes an aggressive push on more grants and other outside funding

which the General Manager has been very successful with over the last two to three years, and supports a two-year capital investment plan that protects the reliability of our critical infrastructure.

Member De Jesus reported that the State released its water plan update last week, a planning document which is issued every five years. The plan was released in conjunction with the final snowpack survey event. At the event, the Governor talked about the need for Sites Reservoir, the Delta conveyance, and voluntary agreements on managing flows throughout the Delta. Member De Jesus reported that the Governor made statements about how these projects are needed to address climate change impacts and that the statement received a lot of press coverage.

Member De Jesus report that May is Water Awareness Month and MWD staff are planning a five-week mini-campaign to draw greater public attention to conservation and rebates, tap water safety, progress on important water infrastructure projects, and will host one of the One Water Awards that honor local businesses that have used MWD's innovative conservation program funds for new water saving projects in their own communities.

Member De Jesus reported that MWD released a 2023 year-end review document, the updated version of its annual report that is prepared in a more visual and readable way. The report is posted on MWD's website. Member De Jesus provided copies of the report to Board members.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2024 and 2025 Annual Operating Plans

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported on the 2024 and 2025 Annual Operating Plans (AOPs), noting that the 2024 AOP had yet to be finalized. Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that there would be a fourth AOP consultation in May to finalize the document, noting that Reclamation is likely waiting to finalize the document until a Record of Decision is issued on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on Interim Period operations. Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that meetings have been scheduled over the summer and fall for preparation of the 2025 AOP.

Glen Canyon Dam Interim Low Elevation Operational Guidance

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation hosted a webinar on Glen Canyon Dam interim low elevation operational guidance. Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that the

guidance was in response to recent information about damage to Glen Canyon Dam's bypass tubes from operation at low elevations. Reclamation shared a memorandum in conjunction with the webinar, which identified two actions: 1.) Exercise the full extent of operational capabilities within the Upper Colorado Basin to maintain Powell elevation of 3,490', and 2.) At certain reservoir elevations, operate bypass tubes at less-than-full capacity to prevent cavitation. Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the majority of the memo focused on the technical details and risks that led Reclamation to implement these actions. The memo includes a table describing how bypass tube operation capacity would be decreased as reservoir elevations decline.

In response to a question from Board Member Fisher, Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that Reclamation is conducting ongoing studies and is planning to issue a report on options to ensure that Glen Canyon Dam is able to continue releasing water at low elevations, but there isn't currently a clear pathway for resolving the problem. Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that she was encouraged by the first action listed in the memo, which indicated that Reclamation would make releases from upstream reservoirs, and maybe take other upstream actions, to protect Powell's operability.

Chairman Hamby noted that the volume of water in Lake Powell between minimum power pool and deadpool was 4.5 MAF, or the same capacity as Lake Shasta, the largest reservoir in California. Member Fisher suggested that the Lower Basin states submit a letter to Reclamation encouraging their rapid evaluation of structural fixes at Glen Canyon Dam.

Post-2026 Process Update

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that Lower Basin stakeholders had met several times with the Bureau of Reclamation to provide detailed information on how the Lower Basin proposal should be modeled in the forthcoming Post-2026 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Deputy Director Neuwerth also noted that Lower Basin stakeholders continue to refine their proposal, defining how aspects like surplus and storage programs would work.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that several additional post-2026 proposals had been submitted to Reclamation in the past month, including an alternative submitted by a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a proposal from Jack Schmidt, Eric Kuhn, and John Fleck. Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that the Schmidt-Kuhn-Fleck proposal focused on flexible releases from Glen Canyon Dam and didn't include a framework for reductions to water users. The NGO alternative also focused on flexible dam releases, and it specified the volume but not the allocation of shortages.

Washington, D.C. Report

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the President's budget for FY-2025 had been released in March. The President also recently signed into law a package of six FY-2024 appropriation bills that will fund Reclamation. Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the Hoover Dam Act was recently introduced in both the House and Senate. The bill would release some funding tied up in the Lower Basin Development Fund.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Hamby reported that a briefing was recently held with the California House and Senate staff to walk through the Lower Basin Post-2026 Alternative. Chairman Hamby and Adel Hagekhalil, MWD's General Manager, also recently visited Washington, D.C. to perform outreach to Congressional delegations. He noted that a highlight of the trip was a meeting with the California House Democratic caucus, which included robust discussion and engagement. Chairman Hamby reported that it was also helpful to engage with Northern California representatives, who understood that pressure on the Colorado River would create new challenges on the Delta. Chairman Hamby and Mr. Hagekhalil also met with Senator Padilla, Congressman Calvert, White House staffers, and Reclamation Commissioner Touton. Chairman Hamby reported that California's Congressional delegation is engaged, supportive, and unified on California's current position.

Chairman Hamby also reported that he and others in California have spoken at several recent conferences, including the American West Conference and American Society of Civil Engineers.

Chairman Hamby noted that he and John Entsminger recently had a call with NGO representatives about their post-2026 alternative. Chairman Hamby reported that there were some aspects of the NGO proposal that were complementary to the Lower Basin's proposal, including storage.

Chairman Hamby reported that the seven Basin States had not met since January, although there were some productive discussions occurring between states. Chairman Hamby also noted that there would be a Federal-State-Tribes meeting later in April.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 2:14 p.m.