

MINUTES OF MEETING
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at the Steve Robbins Administration Building of Coachella Valley Water District, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, CA 92211.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

Gloria Cordero (MWD)	Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)
Gina Dockstader (IID Alternate)	Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)	Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)	Peter Nelson (CVWD)
Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)	Frank Ruiz (Public Member)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

David De Jesus (MWD Alternate)	David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	Jack Seiler (PVID Alternate)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)	David Vigil (DFW Altern)
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)	

Others Present:

Steven Abbott	Jessica Neuwerth
Nick Bahr	Alexi Schnell
Jim Barrett	Brad Robinson
Dennis Davis	Alex Rodriguez
JR Echard	Eric Ruckdaschel
Jeff Faxon	Shanti Rosset
Christopher Harris	Tina Shields
Ned Hyduke	Gary Tavetian
Laura Lamdin	Joseph Vanderhorst
Aaron Mead	Petya Vasileva
Travis Moore	Jerry Zimmerman
Yuanyuan Myint	

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

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

Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of the March 13, 2024, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the March 13, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Vice Chairman Madaffer moved that the minutes to be approved, second by Member Jones. By roll-call vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Colorado River Board of California Organizational Overview

Chairman Hamby stated the purpose of presenting the organizational overview is to provide a background information for the Board to continue the discussion regarding the goals, priorities, and budget for the board in the next two years. Chairman Hamby encouraged suggestions from the Board.

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an overview of CRB's establishment and structure of the Board. CRB was established in 1937 per Part 5, Division 6 of the California Water Code. CRB is a state agency within the California Natural Resources Agency with ten members appointed by the Governor to make reports and recommendations to the Governor. The Board also selects a chairman, who serves as California's Commissioner, who serves at the pleasure of the Board. Under the direction of the Board and to the end that the rights and interests of the State, its agencies and its citizens into and in respect of, the water of the Colorado River System, and the use thereof may be properly safeguarded and protected. The Commissioner is delegated a number of different tasks such as investigating water uses and rights, negotiating with other Basin States and United States, and formulating and recommending actions for the Governor or the Legislature in California. The Board also appoints an Executive Director whose duties are as required by the Commissioner and the Board.

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an overview regarding CRB rules and regulations. CRB rules can be updated at the discretion of the Board and were last updated in June 2018. Elections of Chairman and Vice Chairman are conducted in every four years (starting January 2019). Chairman and Vice Chairman serve at the pleasure of the Board. Vice Chairman presides at Board meetings in the absence of the Chairman. Board meetings are held on the Wednesday after the second Tuesday of the month. Special meetings can be held at the call of the Chairman or a majority of the Board members. The Executive Director is selected by the Board in accordance with State Personnel Board rules.

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided that the ten Board members include: six members from local water and power agencies, nominated by their respective boards then appointed by the Governor; one member each designated by the Director of the California Department of Water Resources and the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; and two public members appointed by the Governor.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that the six local agencies are also members of the Six Agency Committee and Colorado River Authority, which are Joint Power Authorities that fund CRB's operations, host Basin tours and events, and support lobbying and research projects.

Deputy Director Neuwerth gave a summary of CRB's accomplishments through the years. She stated that CRB has been involved in almost every major activity representing California related to Colorado River such as Arizona vs. California, California's Colorado River Water Use Plan, California's 4.4 Plan in 1999. The goal of the CRB is to provide a unified voice for California, the agencies, and the public in negotiations.

Executive Director Harris added that the idea for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program was born in the back of a bus on a Colorado River Authority tour.

Deputy Director Neuwerth showed the organizational chart of CRB which constituted a technical team and the administrative team. The Deputy Director serves as direct supervisor to both teams. She stated the duties of the Executive Director, and the Deputy Director include but are not limited to representing California's interests and policy positions in negotiations and oversee procurement and various reports to the State. The Principal Engineer, which is currently vacant, supervises two Water Resources Engineers: Angela Rashid and David Rheinheimer. The engineer team focuses on various tasks such as modeling, tracking hydrology, and forecasting updates. Angela Rashid is the project lead for the Lower Colorado Water Supply Project. David Reinheimer is involved in modeling efforts. The engineering team also helps develop operating plans, prepare water reports, and other meeting materials. Shana Rapoport is the sole environmental staffer, who is the lead for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program and the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program. Shana Rapoport also serves

on the Minute 323 Environmental Work Group and helps prepare board packets. The administrative team has a long list of responsibilities including but not limited to procurement, budgeting and accounting, board meeting logistics and posting, personnel, and payroll.

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an overview of CRB's major programs and stated that CRB also serves as the State's representative on Federal Advisory Committees such as the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group and Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum.

Presentation of Draft Colorado River Board of California FY 2024-2025 Budget

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an overview of CRB's budget for fiscal year 2024-2025. She stated that the budget is included in the Governor's annual budget and must be approved by the legislature. Any changes to CRB's budget require a budget change proposal to be submitted to CRB's parent agency, the California Natural Resources Agency, and the Department of Finance for approval. CRB's total budget for fiscal year 2024-2025 is \$2,840,000, which constitutes \$2,337,000 for total personal services and \$503,000 for operating expenses. Personal services include salaries and benefits. Operating expenses include but are not limited to: contracts, meeting and travel expenses, and office supplies. CRB currently has 12 full-time positions and two part-time positions.

Vice Chairman Madaffer stated that the Governor's May revised stated that there were 10,000 employees saving by eliminating vacant position. He asked if CRB's vacant positions would be eliminated.

Executive Director Harris responded that CRB would likely retain the vacant positions since CRB does not receive any state funding. Executive Director Harris added that we are in the process of getting the hiring package ready for the Principal Engineer position and exploring the option to reclassify a vacant position to Public Information Officer per the Board's direction.

Member Jones added that there were personnel rules about how long a position is vacant for. However, there were ways to work around it.

Member Fisher mentioned that when the State encountered financial difficulties in the past, there was discussion to eliminate CRB. It took a while to explain and convince the State that there was no need to eliminate CRB since CRB was operated on 100% non-state funds.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that whether CRB is exempt from state directives because of its non-state funding source varies on a case-by-case basis. She added that the unexpended funds from any fiscal year would be returned to us.

Member Jones states that an initiative to eliminate boards and commissions came up fairly routine in the state government. If the boards and commissions were able to demonstrate the needs and values for its existence, the elimination would not likely proceed.

Executive Director Harris agreed with Member Jones. He stated that he had tried to establish a good working relationship with the state government, federal government, and CRB's parent agency. He stated that he would meet with different stakeholders of state government on a regular basis to give status updates for the various issues that CRB represented the state's interest such as basin states discussions and negotiations, and the agreement with the Department of Reclamation for the Salton Sea. Member Fisher concurred and appreciated Executive Director Harris's efforts to build those relationships.

Board/Agency Staff Workshop: Priorities and Work Plan

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an update on the results of the CRB stakeholders survey. Responses include but are not limited to 1) water reports and member agency reports were helpful, 2) suggestions on future meeting content relates to more lobbyist efforts, board workshop, Salton Sea, and Mexico. 3) suggestions for more consistent meeting locations, adding virtual meeting options, and increasing board member engagement. There was a general agreement that CRB needs a more robust process for setting and meeting goals. There was a request for increasing coordination with member agencies. There was also a shared interest in improved messaging and public outreach. Deputy Director Neuwerth pointed out there was a chart in the board packet showing detailed statistics of the result.

Member Fisher asked how many total responses received. Deputy Director Neuwerth responded 17.

Chairman Hamby invited all board members to a discussion regarding CRB's priorities and work plan. The topics include 1) strategic and budget planning, 2) communications and outreach, 3) meeting style and format, 4) member agency coordination, and 5) Six Agency Commission and Colorado River Authority review.

Member Joaquin appreciated the expertise every member brought to the board and stated that we should improve on communication and outreach to share the CRB's accomplishments.

Member Jones agreed with Member Joaquin that the communication and visibility of CRB need to be improved. She also emphasized that CRB represents the interest of the State of California.

Member Nelson suggested having a CRB Staff Member, the Executive Director or the Deputy Director, to be the board liaison to support board members with CRB related events or matters.

Vice Chairman Madaffer suggested that he would like to see more collaboration among member agencies and more involvement of alternates. He would like to include alternates in the closed session if it was allowed. He stated that we need to tell a better story about the management and conservation of the Colorado River to the country. He stated that it was in both upper and lower basin's best interests to reach an agreement instead of pursuing judgment in court.

Member Codero stated that her role was not only representing her agency, but the State of California as well. She would like to help to align some of the visions and the goals of all members. She would like to be able to have more engagement as a board member and to build stronger relationships with each other and with the public. She suggested that we should have a board retreat soon.

Member Fisher raised the questions that why and how CRB was established. He thought the reason CRB includes the six local agencies was to bring more local influence along with other board members to better represent California's interests in the Colorado River. He believes that CRB's job was to develop technical expertise on the Colorado River. He mentioned that we used to have agency manager meetings in the past. He believes these agency manager meetings helped us better understand different issues and improved communication among agencies. He suggested that to re-start the agency managers' meeting.

Deputy Director Neuwerth asked if those agency manager meetings also included members of the board.

Mr. Zimmerman answered that the law has evolved, and board members and agency managers both attended the agency manager meetings when he was the Executive Director of CRB years ago. He emphasized that CRB is a state agency and represents the interests of the State of California. The Six Agency Committee was formed to provide financial support to CRB when there were insufficient state funds. The Colorado River Authority, formerly called Colorado River Association, was formed to provide advocacy and lobby for California's rights on the Colorado River. Thus, the Colorado River Authority would host tours, educate other states, and the federal government on what California was doing to conserve the Colorado River.

Member Fisher stated that CRB was a complicated and unique organization. He believes that CRB's job was to focus on providing technical support on issues related to the Colorado River on behalf of California. He did not believe that CRB should focus on public relations or political positioning. He mentioned that CRB has utilized staff from the Metropolitan Water District of

Southern California to do some public relations related works. He believes that we already had the vehicle for doing public relations and might not need to hire a Public Information Officer at CRB.

Member Nelson commented that the agency manager provided viable technical support on Colorado River issues for each local agency. Involving agency managers in decision making was important.

Member Ruiz agreed that CRB was representing the State of California. He acknowledged that there were different perspectives and interests within California. He would like to see the Board include technical expertise from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), from conservation groups, and from nontraditional voices. He believes that public perception of the Board is important. He would like to have a communications and outreach plan that can help us to continue improving. He also would like to have better engagement, better relationships, and better coordination. He stated that he would appreciate hearing different perspectives such as how tribal communities or other communities perceive the role of the Board. There were many NGOs that have done fantastic jobs on the Colorado River. He suggested that we should build better bridges with those NGOs.

Member Jones pointed out that hydrology has changed from a state perspective. CRB does not just represent Southern California; it represents the State of California, which is linked to the rest of the State hydrologically by the State Water Project. During droughts, the State has been working with local agencies to balance the demand on the Colorado River to free up State Water Project water that could help drought-stressed areas in the rest of the State.

Executive Director Harris added that CRB had taken a more holistic approach on the management of entire State water portfolio and established closer coordination with the Department of Water Resources and the California Natural Resources Agency. For example, the Salton Sea did not become basin-wide issues and management of the Colorado River until recent years. He mentioned that we have involved agriculture communities and NGOs. For the first time now, CRB was working with Tribal partners. He appreciated all the comments from the Board.

Member Gloria believes that CRB can do a lot more than just providing technical support on the Colorado River.

Chairman Hamby appreciated all the comments and wanted to summarize the comments provided today. First, we all have a shared understanding that CRB represents California as a whole. There were great suggestions from Board members such as communications; establishing partners with Mexico, NGOs, Salton Sea, and tribes; coordination; and adaptation to change. Based on all the discussion and survey results, he and Vice Chairman Madaffer have created the working concepts for today's discussion, which were distributed to the Board as a handout. First,

establishing the process of setting annual strategic goals and incorporating those goals into budget planning. Second, developing a tool for communication and outreach plans. Third, revisiting our board meeting locations, format, and frequency and maybe including a board retreat in the beginning of the year. Fourth, suggesting some improvements to our board meetings such as: having special presentations/speakers, round table format, and virtual access. Fifth, re-establishing regular agency manager meetings. Finally, evaluating the Six Agency Authority and the Colorado River Authority and considering changes such as updating the membership and consolidating these two organizations. Chairman Hamby was seeking comments from the Board for these working concepts.

Member Jones provided a historical comparison for the multiple interstate rivers in California, which include the Klamath River, the Colorado River, the Truckee River, and the Carson River. All rivers started work on either interstate reclamation projects or negotiations related to interstate allocations around the early 1900s. The Colorado River got an interstate compact in 1922. The Klamath River got a federal reclamation project in 1902 and an interstate compact. The interstate compact commission for the Klamath River has been moot for many years due to litigation. The Truckee, Carson, and Water Rivers had draft compacts that were approved by the State but were not accepted by Congress. The Truckee and Carson River were settled by a congressional apportionment that included a complex operating agreement for the Truckee River. The Waker River remains in debate, and nothing has gone forward.

Member Nelson made comments regarding evaluation of the Six Agency Committee and the Colorado River Authority. He agreed with Mr. Zimmerman that the Colorado River Authority was formed to conduct advocacy for the lobby. He had concerns about combining the Six Agency Committee and the Colorado River Authority. He pointed out that everyone who wishes to attend the Six Agency Committee and the Colorado River Authority meetings should be able to stay as long as we all understand who can vote. He also mentioned that we had to consider the pros and cons of offering virtual access for the CRB board meetings.

Executive Director Chris Harris believes that the State of California is in the process of considering making changes to the current law to allow virtual access for board meetings.

Member Jones added that having a virtual board meeting prior to COVID was very difficult. She believes that the ability to have virtual board meetings was not a permanent status, but would defer to Gary Tavetian, the CRB counsel. She suggested that the Board could consider having some board meetings virtually and some in person since board meetings were the only opportunity for each board member to communicate.

Mr. Tavetian stated that he would investigate virtual options and get back to the Board.

Chairman Hamby summarized the discussion and stated that we would develop an annual strategic and budget planning process for the board to consider for 2025.

Deputy Director Neuwerth clarifies that CRB FY 24-25 budget most likely won't be able to make any changes. Any budget change proposals for FY 24-25 normally would need to be submitted to the Department of Finance around September 2023.

Chairman Hamby asked if there were any comments on the goals, logistics and other discussions with the board.

Member Jones stated that CRB is currently funded by local agencies. Right now, might not be a good time to ask for funds from the State considering the budget deficits. However, CRB could ask for funds from the State in the future. Expanding communications would take resources and California Natural Resources Agency would be supportive. She stated that we just had to consider the timing and planning the budget, when asking for funds from the State.

Chairman Hamby thanked Member Jones for her comment and moved on to the next workplan concepts – developing tools to improve communication and create outreach plan.

Deputy Director Neuwerth added that CRB Staff had started looking into potentially developing an internal position and its responsibility includes public outreach and public relations. CRB Staff had also considered utilizing funds from the Colorado River Authority to develop a strategic communications plan. She stated that we could reclassify existing vacant positions to include some public outreach without any impact on day-to-day operations.

Chairman Hamby moved on to the next workplan concepts – reviewing meeting frequency, location, and format for the best interest of the Board.

Deputy Director Neuwerth suggested taking into consideration that there were few board meetings in every year normally been cancelled when planning on the frequency of the board meeting.

Executive Director Harris suggested that we should schedule a monthly board meeting to keep the flexibility.

Member Jones concurred with Executive Director Harris and suggested using the board meeting as a communication tool and providing flexibility as to how to attend the meeting depending on the topics of the month.

Chairman Hamby summarized the discussion for the board meetings and moved on to the last workplan concept – evaluation of the Six Agency Committee and the Colorado River

Authority. He stated that the goal would be to present the 2024 CRB workplan to the Board in the future for approval.

Member Nelson added that it would be great to only schedule agency manager meetings when it is needed.

Chairman Hamby asked if there were any additional comments on the 2024 CRB workplan concepts.

Member Joaquin believes that it is always beneficial to do self-evaluation and appreciates different perspectives.

Chairman Hamby asked if we have skipped two items in the agenda – the budget and the accomplishment. Deputy Director Neuwerth confirmed that the two items were included in the board packet. If anyone has any comments, please let CRB Staff know. The CRB FY 24-25 budget would be presented on June 12, 2024, at the board meeting for approval.

LOCAL AND STATE WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORTS

Member Jones, representing DWR, reported that the State is experiencing abnormally average precipitation despite the warm temperatures. She noted that the runoff forecast for the big rivers in California fluctuated between 95% to 105% of average. She added that reservoir storage has benefited from carry storage from the previous winter.

Member Jones reported that DWR released a semiannual report on California groundwater conditions which shows improvements in some areas. She explained that groundwater has high latency in terms of data, with a reporting lag of six months because it takes time for a molecule of groundwater to make its way from the Sierra Nevada Mountains down to the central valley floor. She presented a map showing a one-year change in groundwater levels and a bar chart showing a five-year change for the 7,000 wells in the system. She explained that the map and chart show that over the longer time periods, the State's groundwater levels have been changing. She added that last year's water year helped improve groundwater levels. She also displayed a chart showing Water Year-2023 (WY 2023) groundwater recharge by basin which showed that the Santa Clara River Valley-Oxnard had the highest groundwater recharge per acre.

Member Cordero, representing MWD, reported that MWD's combined reservoir storage as of May 1st is 87% of capacity. She added that the Colorado River Aqueduct will be on a seven-pump flow through the end of the year. She stated that the 2024 diversion target is 959,000 AF and as of May 13th, 214,382 AF has been diverted.

Member Cordero reported that January and February deliveries to its member agencies were 77% of the annual average. She added that the 2024 delivery target for Desert Water Agency Coachella Valley water district is 272,000 AF.

Chairman Hamby reported on precipitation conditions in the Eastern Sierra for the LADWP stating that conditions were slightly below average as of May 14, 2024.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Executive Director Harris reported that as of May 13th, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,561.94 feet with 7.93 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 34% of capacity. The water level at Lake Mead was 1,071.06 feet with 9.20 MAF of storage, or 35% of capacity. The total system storage was 24.54 MAF, or 42% of capacity, which is 3.61 MAF more than system storage at this time last year. He noted that the Colorado River Basin is heading into the runoff season, and the precipitation season is largely over.

Executive Director Harris reported that as of May 3rd, the WY-2024 forecasted unregulated inflow into Lake Powell is 7.79 MAF, or 81% of normal. He reported that the forecasted April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 5.1 MAF, or 80% of normal. He stated that observed inflow into Lake Powell for April was 81% of normal and the May inflow forecast was 92% of normal. He reported that WY-2024 precipitation to date is 102% of normal and the current Basin snowpack was 113% of normal.

Executive Director Harris reported on the Colorado River Basin's antecedent soil moisture conditions, which influence runoff capacity. He presented a map displaying fall 2023 soil moisture conditions and April 2024 observed soil moisture and unregulated streamflow. He explained that conditions in fall 2023 were dry and resulted in less streamflow. He stated that runoff conditions in the Colorado River headwaters are normal and slightly above normal. He added that the San Juan Basin, in the Four Corners region, has much drier antecedent soil conditions and may experience reduced runoff.

Executive Director Harris reported on basin-wide precipitation conditions in March and April, stating that conditions in March were above average, while conditions in April were dry. He added that the Basin will likely experience dry conditions through next fall and early winter. He reported that the snow water equivalent (SWE) above Lake Powell is 110% of median.

Executive Director Harris reported on the April 2024 24-Month Study projections. He stated that the most probable release from Lake Powell will be 7.48 MAF for WY-2024 and WY-2025. He reported that it is projected that Lake Mead will remain in a Tier 1 shortage condition for WY-2024 and WY-2025.

Executive Director Harris reported that through the end of April, the Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs captured 31,147 AF and 27,332 AF respectively. He also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 14,684 AF, compared to 14,603 AF at this time last year. Executive Director Harris stated that saline drainage bypass to the Cienga de Santa Clara is currently about 49,041 AF.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS STAFF REPORT

Colorado River Salinity Control Fix Legislation

Deputy Director Neuwerth provided an update regarding the salinity control fix legislation. The proposed legislation would adjust some of the non-federal cost shares required under the Salinity Control Act, which will lessen the strain on the Lower Basin Development Fund. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that the bill was introduced in the House in early April and has a number of cosponsors. CRB is keeping an eye on the legislation as it moves forward.

Member Nelson asked if the legislation has a number. Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that the number is the Board packet.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Mr. Tavetian provided an update regarding the *Save the Colorado v. United States* lawsuit. Mr. Tavetian stated that the lawsuit challenging the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan (LTEMP), purporting that the plan didn't take climate change issues into account.

Mr. Tavetian stated that the court of appeals upheld the trial court decision which was in favor of the United States. Mr. Tavetian added that the challenge against the LTEMP should be dead; however, they can always petition for review before the Supreme Court.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the Technical Work Group (TWG) for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (GCDAMP) met in April.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that the GCDAMP received an update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that it has issued a biological opinion that provides Endangered Species Act (ESA) coverage for the change in Glen Canyon Dam operations for the interim period Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the GCDAMP is still working on efforts to control non-native fish and smallmouth bass. Ms. Neuwerth added that the National Park Service is slowly working on modifying the slough located a couple miles below the dam that is a known breeding hotspot for these fish. Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that it is a kidney-shaped

slough and that the top end of it needs to be opened so it has flow through to cool down the water. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that the habitat modification is going to eliminate the area as a non-native refuge.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) is holding a virtual meeting right now and that the TWG will be meeting again in July.

Lower Colorado Multi-Species Conservation Program

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Colorado Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) has a new Biological Opinion. Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that this is the second patch to this program to increase the coverage for reductions in flow to cover activities such as the creation of intentionally created surplus (ICS), other reasons for leaving water in Lake Mead, and moving water between users that impacts the flow in the river and requires ESA coverage.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that when the LCR MSCP began it included coverage for about 850,000 acre feet of change in flow between Hoover and Parker Dams. About a year ago, the coverage for flow was increased to 1.574 MAF; however, that proved to be insufficient. The new biological opinion provides coverage up to 2.083 MAF, which was the number in the original interim period SEIS, with the opportunity to expand that coverage if needed to up to three million acre feet.

Deputy Director Neuwerth added that conservation measures in the new Biological Opinion include the creation of a little more backwater and marsh habitat, increased monitoring and research, and some minimization actions at existing habitats to lessen the potential effect from the reduction in flow.

Member Nelson inquired as to how long the extension in coverage is applicable. Deputy Director Neuwerth replied that it is through 2028.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the program, which goes through 2055, is going to need a broader patch and that we are in the initial stages of figuring out what kind of coverage will be needed for the remainder of this program.

Executive Director Harris added that it provides a bridge between the remaining interim period and the post-2026 operations.

Member Nelson asked for a description of CRB's involvement in the development of biological opinion and who else from California and the other states participated. Deputy Director Neuwerth replied that although the Biological Assessment was drafted by the Bureau of Reclamation, a small group of MSCP members, including CRB, have been meeting weekly for over

a year to provide input. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that because this program is a federal and non-federal partnership, it's been a little bit unusual to change the federal permit but not the non-federal permit. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that they have been making sure that the federal permit covers the non-federal permittees. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that there is a pretty good relationship with the USFWS.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the water accounting report for 2023 is being finalized and that we are at the tipping point of the coverage that was available before that latest Biological Opinion, and the small LCR MSCP group is discussing how to proceed.

Member Nelson inquired regarding what would happen if the diversions were more than the coverage. Deputy Director Neuwerth replied that we have to consult with the USFWS and it would be up to them to determine what corrective action is necessary. Usually if coverage is exceeded, the next step would be to consult with the USFWS to get additional coverage. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that the consultation has already been done.

Executive Director Harris added that additional conversation measures are probably going to require some additional marsh and backwater habitat and that if it gets up to three million acre-feet, that is expensive habitat to create. Cottonwoods and honey mesquite habitat is pretty cheap and straightforward. It's expensive to move a lot of dirt and create a new backwater and marsh. Executive Director Harris added that we are trying to dial it in, trying not to do too much but also ensure that it is broad enough that we can be flexible and nimble in our water management activities and ensure that we retain our incidental take authorizations.

Deputy Director Neuwerth added that this is going to be important going forward to make sure that we have this piece in place for the next set of guidelines.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the LCR MSCP had its technical meeting last week hosted by San Diego. Deputy Director Neuwerth thanked the San Diego representatives.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that in 2023 about 150 acres of cottonwood willow habitat were established, bringing the total program acreage to about 7,200. The program's total required acreage is 8,132. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that the 8,000 number will likely get a little bigger when with additional change in flow mitigation.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the program has in its sightlines the next habitats it is likely going to build. Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that work continues at the Dennis Underwood Conservation area in the PVID area, and the program is dredging a new connected backwater in California called Section 26. The program has also stocked about 400,000 native fish from 2005 to 2023. Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that the program is required to stock 1.2 million fish through 2055, and the program is largely on track.

Deputy Director Neuwerth reported that species monitoring is ongoing. Some of the covered species have been detected at the Dennis Underwood Conservation Area and other sites are continuing to be good spots for birds.

Salton Sea Workshop

Executive Director Harris reported that at the end of April and on May 1st there was a workshop that was put together by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (U.S. ACOE). The U.S. ACOE is in the process of preparing a feasibility assessment to see what their role can be in participating, cooperating, or adding to the existing Salton Sea Management Program being implemented by the State of California, the Imperial Irrigation District, the United States, et cetera.

Executive Director Harris stated that the U.S. ACOE is fact finding, gathering information, and hearing from the various stakeholder groups that are involved. Executive Director Harris added that Member Ruiz and Ms. Shields attended as well and that he thought the workshop was well done and could lead to additional federal involvement, participation, and potentially funding.

Executive Director Harris reported that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' feasibility report says, yes, this is something that the U.S. ACOE should get involved in and that he thinks that Mike Connor could do a chief's report that could lead to additional federal involvement in the Salton Sea. Executive Director Harris stated that this is the introductory phase of this planning process, conducting the feasibility assessment.

Executive Director Harris asked if Member Ruiz or Ms. Shields had anything to add. Ms. Shields stated that they are hearing that the federal government is going to pay for sixty-five percent. Ms. Shields added that she has asked specifically what projects they have funded at this scale in ecosystem restoration. Ms. Shields stated it was a much smaller list and you have to request appropriations every year.

Executive Director Harris stated that the only other program the U.S. ACOE is doing that is similar in scope and scale is perhaps the Everglades. Ms. Shields added that there are projects in Arizona.

Member Nelson asked if they had to request money last week. Ms. Shields responded that she believed it was for the study. Executive Director Harris confirmed the funding was for the study.

MEMBER AGENCY REPORTS

Palo Verde Irrigation District (PVID)

PVID General Manager Mr. JR Echard showed a slide and described the process of repairing a break in PVID's water delivery system to prevent a longer-term outage. Mr. Echard focused on one particular gate failure, noting that it typically takes around five days to replace such infrastructure.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Deputy Director Neuwerth showed a slide summarizing the 2024 Lake Havasu General Sport Fish Survey. Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that DFW is doing fish studies. Executive Director Harris explained that the activity was with a longstanding partnership between the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, DFW, and Arizona Game and Fish, and that they have been doing this study for more than 20 years in Lake Havasu to improve sport fishing opportunities.

California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Member Jones began by showing and describing a map of where DWR has been doing Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) electrical resistivity surveys to support implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Referring to numerous surveys transect lines on the map, Member Jones explained that the lines are where a helicopter flies with an antenna to assess nonurban areas where groundwater recharge potential could be evaluated. Member Jones highlighted that many transects have been completed and that the actual survey data is now online for the Central Valley. Member Jones noted that transects have now been flown for most of Southern California and that at the Salton Sea hydrology workshop it was mentioned that they are using some of DWR's AEM data, including pre-published raw data. Finally, Member Jones noted that some transects for Southern California and the Owens Valley will be coming online later this summer.

Executive Director Harris expressed awe with the program. Member Nelson also expressed appreciation, noting that he has seen the survey put into practice in the Paso Robles Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and that the product is helpful for groundwater management. Member Jones noted that a practical application of this is in an area thinking about permitting more urban development, to avoid developing in an area because it has high groundwater recharge potential. Member Nelson remarked that it is also good for the agricultural community to be able to say whether or not a site is good for drilling for water.

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

IID Water Department Manager Ms. Tina Shields showed a slide with a map and key points about the planned East Highline Reservoir. Ms. Shields first noted that IID is trying to build the reservoir, with a capacity of about twenty-one hundred acre-feet. Ms. Shields then noted that IID just received a second batch of federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Ms. Shields then noted that there is now a total of 16.5 million dollars in BIL funding for the project, IID's environmental documentation for the project was just certified, and that IID will be proceeding with the final design with the hope of starting construction next year. Ms. Shields commented that the project is modeled after Brock Reservoir. Ms. Shields expressed that the new reservoir would provide IID with a lot of flexibility through its recapture and re-regulation capability. Ms. Shields stated that IID will fill it at night and release from it during the day to serve downstream users.

Member Dockstader noted that May is water safety month and described Dippy Duck, noting that Dippy Duck is just as popular as Santa Claus in the Imperial Valley. Dippy Duck has been IID's water safety mascot since 1966, and, during May, visits schools in full costume. Ms. Dockstader emphasized how important Dippy Duck is and his message to stay out of the canals.

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Vice Chairman Madaffer began by noting that May is Water Awareness Month in California. Vice Chairman Madaffer emphasized the importance of the Salinity Control Fix Act. Vice Chairman Madaffer noted that more than half of SDCWA's water comes from the Colorado River. He further noted that 200,000 acres of land in its service area are for agriculture, with salinity-sensitive crops such as avocados, strawberries, and citrus. Vice Chairman Madaffer noted that the 1970s Salinity Control Program is at risk due to a funding imbalance. He then discussed Senate Bill 2514, noting that SDCWA had expressed its support for the bill. Vice Chairman Madaffer noted that the bill was introduced last summer and that CRB continues to work with its basin partners to support it. He indicated that he believed the bill is going to a committee in the House or Senate on Ag, Nutrition and Forestry, but further indicated that there is currently no hearing date. He expressed concern about when it might be heard and hope that it would be approved.

Vice Chairman Madaffer then reported that Jaymie Bradford joined SDCWA as the new assistant general manager, overseeing public affairs and government relations. He noted that most recently, Ms. Bradford was executive vice president and chief operating officer for the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. Vice Chairman Madaffer noted that Ms. Bradford spent more than a decade with the City of San Diego, indicated that he was proud that when he was

on the San Diego City Council, Ms. Bradford served as his chief policy director, and expressed that he knows that she will do a great job at SDCWA.

Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)

Member Nelson provided a verbal report, noting that CVWD is dealing with a new Chromium-6 Maximum Contamination Level (MCL), with rules currently being written. He noted that Coachella Valley water has very small amounts of naturally occurring Chromium-6 in the groundwater, and that they are trying to figure out how to address this in a new way. Member Nelson noted that several years ago there was an implementation of the Chromium-6 MCL, but that it was challenged due to economic reasons. He indicated that, had that MCL remained in place, it was going to cost CVWD about 250 million dollars to comply.

Member Nelson reported that CVWD is nearly finished with its regulating reservoir near the most recent lining of the Coachella Canal and that he would follow up with a report on that when they are finished. Chairman Hamby requested that Member Nelson share photos and video of the reservoir next time and Member Nelson agreed.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)

Member Cordero reported that MWD passed its biannual budget last month, giving MWD's chair and general manager an opportunity to meet with the Los Angeles Times editorial board. She noted that the meeting went very well, and that MWD's chair and general manager were pleased. Member Cordero then noted one of their quotes in the editorial as "over the decades Southern California's residents may have come to think of cheap water as a birth right, but it will take additional investments to keep water flowing. Even with higher costs passed down to consumers, water in this increasingly arid region remains a bargain."

Member Cordero noted that MWD is celebrating Water Awareness Month this May with a number of activities, including issuing One Water awards to four organizations and businesses for their innovation in their water-saving work, which saves 200 million gallons a year, noting that these projects were partially funded by MWD.

Member Cordero reported that in the previous week MWD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with two new collaborating agencies, including the Friant Water Agency and Westlands Water District. Member Cordero reported that the second is known as a blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley. She indicated that this agreement represents MWD's intent to collaborate with these organizations on common goals and potential for future sustainability.

Member Cordero reported on several opportunities to involve different groups on inspection tours. Member Cordero first noted the Colorado River inspection trip with CVWD,

which she indicated went well. She then noted MWD's first ever Spanish language inspection trip, to the State Water Project, expressing that it was well received by communities and that they hope to do more. She finally noted that later this month MWD will have an inspection trip for the Water Education for Latino Leaders organization in Los Angeles.

Finally, Member Cordero reported that former CRB Member Glen Peterson announced that he is retiring, noting that he received a standing ovation at MWD's last board meeting for his commitment and work. She expressed hope that CRB can invite him back to a board meeting to do the same.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Interim Period SEIS Record of Decision

Executive Director Harris reported on the Record of Decision (ROD) for the SEIS for the 2007 Guidelines and stated a link to the SEIS was included in the Board packet. Executive Director Harris stated that the SEIS modified three portions of the existing 2007 Guidelines ROD. The first part was the May 2023 Lower Basin Interim Period Plan, whereby the three Lower Basin States agreed that they would create up to 3 MAF of additional conservation that would be retained in storage in Lake Mead between 2023 and the end of 2026. Half of that conservation is to be completed by the end of 2025. Executive Director Harris added that the effort is on track.

Executive Director Harris reported that the second significant piece of the SEIS ROD allows the Secretary to reduce the releases from Glen Canyon Dam to as low as 6 MAF in order to protect elevation 3,500', which is ten feet above minimum power pool. The minimum release included in the 2007 Interim Guidelines as 7.0 MAF. Executive Director Harris noted that the likelihood of triggering this provision before 2026 is fairly low.

Executive Director Harris reported that the third major change is a provision to protect elevation 1,000' in Lake Mead. If there is a -24-Month Study projection showing Lake Mead declining to or below 1,025' in the next twelve months, the three Lower Basin States get a 45-day opportunity to develop a plan that would hard protect elevation 1,000' in Lake Mead. If the Lower Basin States' plan is insufficient, Reclamation can take additional actions.

Minute 330

Executive Director Harris reported that in late March, the United States and Mexico executed Minute 330 and that it is the complimentary piece to the Lower Basin's May 2023 Interim Period Plan.

Executive Director Harris stated that the United States is contributing up to 3 MAF of additional conservation for the remaining interim period and Mexico has agreed that it will do 400,000 AF of additional conservation on top of their obligations under Minute 323.

Executive Director Harris stated that this results in a combined 3.4 MAF benefit to Lake Mead storage and that 250,000 AF of Mexico's 400,000 AF commitment will be to the benefit of all system water users rather than remaining in Mexico's water reserve. Executive Director Harris reported that, in exchange, the federal government is going to provide \$65 million to Mexico for projects and activities that help generate those conserved water supplies.

Executive Director Harris added that the Mexican section, water users in District 14, and the municipal and industrial users on the Baja Coast were all committed to this effort.

Executive Director Harris stated that Minute 330 is in the board packet and can also be accessed on the International Boundary and Water Commission's (IBWC) webpage.

Updated Consumptive Users and Losses Reports

Executive Director Harris reported that Reclamation is in the process of updating the Consumptive Uses and Losses reports. These are five-year snapshots of system uses across the basin, both in the Upper Basin and the Lower Basin and include reports on the water release to Mexico. Executive Director Harris reported that the last basin-wide Consumptive Uses and Losses report was issued in 2005. Executive Director Harris added that there have been periodic releases of Upper Basin Consumptive Uses and Losses reports, but with inconsistent methods for calculating consumptive use across the four Upper Basin states.

Executive Director Harris explained that Reclamation is not only working with the states, but also with the USGS, in refining and updating the data and creating new reports and updating earlier reports accordingly. Executive Director Harris stated that these reports will start coming out now and continue through the end of 2025.

Executive Director Harris reported that Reclamation is developing natural flow estimates for the Little Colorado River, the Virgin River, and the Bill Williams River. Executive Director Harris added that a feasibility assessment is being completed to develop a natural flow estimate for the Gila River system.

Executive Director Harris stated the importance of understanding the full water budget to inform decision-making going forward. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that the benefit of these reports is, unlike the annual Water Accounting Reports, they show how much water is used on the tributaries in the Lower Basin.

Member Nelson inquired if the report would account for the Salt and the Verde Rivers. Executive Director Harris confirmed that the reports would include the entire Gila River Basin. Deputy Director Neuwerth noted that California has very little tributary use, and the data would likely show that Arizona is the biggest user of system water.

Deputy Director Neuwerth stated that the reports will only release Lower Basin data through 2015, missing the more recent period when significant Lower Basin reduction has occurred. The reports will likely show pretty high Lower Basin usage when the mainstream and tributaries are included. Deputy Director Neuwerth added that she would expect the Upper Basin to seize on this as evidence that the Lower Basin is overusing water, and the Upper Basin shouldn't be required to share in future reductions.

Vice Chairman Madaffer stated that there is a real opportunity for us to emphasize all that's been done since 2015. Chairman Hamby added that last year was the lowest water use in the Lower Basin since WWII.

Executive Director Harris stated that CRB has also begun to develop some very preliminary messaging points associated with what we expect to see. Executive Director Harris added that he would remind everybody to go back to Brian Richter's paper last month and see what the numbers are for total uses in the Upper Basin system and in the Lower Basin. Executive Director Harris added that he expects that what Reclamation releases will align quite nicely with what Brian already has out there in the public space.

Executive Director Harris stated that he, Chairman Hamby and others have been thinking strategically about having some talking points for how to respond positively and the value of having this information and how to appropriately look at it and evaluate it and use it going forward. Those talking points will be shared shortly.

Member Jones asked a follow-up question. After the Salton Sea Future Hydrology Workshop a few weeks ago, since there was discussion about groundwater balance in there, Member Jones went back and looked at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) accounting surface calculations. They were last updated with 2007/2008 data, and a lot of that accounting surface is in Arizona where there's a lot of extraction going on. Member Jones asked if Executive Director Harris knew if the USGS has plans to update the accounting surface.

Executive Director Harris responded that he didn't know if the Tucson USGS office or Reclamation plan to revisit those calculations. Executive Director Harris stated that one of the uses of the data was implementation of California's the Lower Colorado Water Supply Project, which is now up and running; however, updated data may be necessary to execute a similar program in Arizona. Executive Director Harris stated that it was a great question, and he would follow up.

Update on Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act of 2022

Executive Director Harris reported that he included in the monthly report that Congress passed the Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act in 2022. It was signed by the President in very early 2023 and allows the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) to implement water conservation activities within the Arizona portion of their reservation and then store the water. Executive Director Harris added that the water can be stored in Lake Mead, with the Arizona Water Banking Authority, or the tribes can forebear on the volumes that have been stored and transferred to other users within Arizona. Executive Director Harris stated that primarily it is focused on helping to backstop or bolster water supplies that are available to the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas, or could be stored for the tribe's own behalf, or on somebody else's behalf in storage in Lake Mead.

Executive Director Harris stated that he is optimistic that over the course of the post-2026 guidelines there will be more tribal opportunities, particularly among the five mainstream tribes, to take their federal entitlements and have additional management flexibility and perhaps realize additional economic benefit of these very valuable senior water rights.

Executive Director Harris stated that this is a great example of the Secretary of the Interior, the Arizona governor, and CRIT Chairwoman Amelia Flores getting together to sign this first set of agreements that allow the CRIT now to market portions of their water allocations off reservation within Arizona.

Water Accounting and Operations Update

Executive Director Harris reported that the final AOP for water year 2024, calendar year 2024, is being finalized and that the rationale for it being so late this year is because Reclamation wanted to have the SEIS ROD included in the decision made in the AOP. The final consultation was held yesterday by webinar. Executive Director Harris added that the AOP includes good information and sets the stage as we shift to going forward into post-2026.

Executive Director Harris reported that Reclamation will imminently be releasing the final 2023 Water Use and Accounting Report for the three Lower Basin states. Executive Director Harris added that the report includes a lot of very good information, including technical comments from Metropolitan and others in California that were provided to Reclamation to help them finalize the report.

Washington, D.C. Report

Executive Director Harris reported that Sara Tucker provided updates and there is a writeup in the monthly report. Executive Director Harris added that CRB is trying to get better at providing links where for Board members to look at the information themselves.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board entered Executive Session at 12:41 p.m.

Pursuant to Section 11126, subdivision (a)(1) of the Government Code, an Executive Session was held to address personnel issues.

REGULAR SESSION

The Board resumed the regular session at 1:00 p.m. No action was taken.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Hamby stated that the June 12, 2024, board meeting will be at San Diego, CA.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.