

MINUTES OF MEETING
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, October 9, 2024

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at Steve Robbins Administration Building of Coachella Valley Water District, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, CA 92211.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)	Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)
Gina Dockstader (IID Alternate)	Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	Frank Ruiz (Public Member)
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)	Brad Robinson (PVID Alternate)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)	David Vigil (DFW Alternate Designee)
Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)	

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Gloria Cordero (MWD)	Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)	Peter Nelson (CVWD)
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)	David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)

Others Present:

Steven Abbott	John Powell
Nick Bahr	Shana Rapoport
Robert Cheng	Jason Rollo
Dennis Davis	Carrie Scott
JR Echard	Alexi Schnell
Susan Fisher	Joseph Vanderhorst
Miguel Hernandez	Petya Vasileva
Ned Hyduke	Jerry Zimmerman
Eric Katz	
Aron King	
Yuanyuan Myint	
Jessica Neuwerth	

CALL TO ORDER

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

WELCOME FROM COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Member Estrada, representing the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), welcomed everyone.

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.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION – Salton Sea Management Update by Miguel Hernandez from the California Natural Resources Agency

Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer with the Salton Sea Management Program of the California Natural Resources Agency, provided an overview of the Salton Sea Management Program, including coordination with federal, regional, and local partners.

Mr. Hernandez stated that the Salton Sea Management Program is comprised of three different state agencies led by the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department of Water Resources. The team is mandated to deliver restoration projects for the Salton Sea.

Mr. Hernandez stated that the agencies are committed to delivering 29,800 acres of projects by 2028 as specified in the ten-year plan that started in 2018. A key priority of the ten-year plans is also to continue to work with the Salton Sea Authority in coordination with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Salton Sea feasibility study, a long-term plan beyond that first ten-year set of projects. Mr. Hernandez stated that priorities also include continuing to strengthen partnerships, institutionalizing inclusive community engagement, and enhance presence within the community.

Mr. Hernandez noted the importance of collaboration with multiple landowners of the Salton Sea. Mr. Hernandez discussed Salton Sea Commitments Agreement, an establishment of programmatic land access agreements in coordination with the U.S. Department of Interior, Imperial Irrigation District, and Coachella Valley Water District.

Mr. Hernandez showed a map that includes some of the projects that are part of that ten-year plan, including the Species Conservation Habitat Project (SCH) and vegetation enhancement projects. Mr. Hernandez stated that the projects are in different stages of planning and design and that some projects are currently under implementation.

Mr. Hernandez provided more details regarding the SCH, including that the past footprint of this project was 4,100 acres total, made up of three different ponds at the mouth of the New River. This is the State's first large-scale project as part of the ten-year plan, and the habitat will help reduce emissions by covering the exposed lakebed. Mr. Hernandez added that this project is expanding. Mr. Hernandez showed a map with the visitor center, also called the vista point, the only public access in this project and a refuge for desert pupfish, an endangered species.

Mr. Hernandez pointed out two major components of the project: the New River Diversion Structure, which retains the water from the New River to help that water be moved to the sedimentation basin and a pump station located over a mile into the Salton Sea that brings water from the sea into the New River Diversion Structure where the water is mixed to achieve a level of salinity for fish to be able to thrive. Mr. Hernandez stated that they were aiming for 20 - 40 ppt salinity level.

Mr. Hernandez reported that with the support of federal partners, \$250 million has been secured to implement Salton Sea restoration projects. \$70 million of those were received in December. An additional 750 acres will be added to SCH to what is referred to as the East Pond 1 Expansion.

Mr. Hernandez showed a slide with the vision for the nearly 8,000 acres of the SCH project. The secure funding to the Inflation Reduction Act alongside the Commitments Agreement with different entities will expand the footprint of that SCH project from 4,100 acres to nearly 8,000 acres of the project once all the ponds with the expansions are completed. Mr. Hernandez noted that a groundbreaking ceremony would be held the following week for the expansion of the site.

Mr. Hernandez stated that they are using soil from the same project area to construct the berm that is needed to build that perimeter of the expansion area. Currently work is around that East Pond 1 Expansion. With additional funding, the plans are to move into the center pond and then water the center pond and then move into the west pond and then water that west pond with the expansion in the years to come.

Mr. Hernandez showed a slide with the Vegetation Enhancement Projects at three different locations around the Salton Sea: Tule Wash, which is south of Salton City, Clubhouse, which is a little bit north of Salton City, and then a smaller but very important project near the community of Bombay Beach.

Mr. Hernandez reported that grass bales are used at some dust suppression sites. The bales are only needed on the outside perimeter of the project to protect vegetation from high winds.

Mr. Hernandez stated that the program monitors dust emissions on a daily basis at three different points within the project area. Mr. Hernandez reported that monitoring has shown reductions in emissions of more than 80% at dust suppression sites.

Mr. Hernandez discussed the Salton Sea Management Project Tracker which has been created in response to requests from the community for a platform where people can see and get the latest on those projects. The Salton Sea Management Project Tracker can be found on the Salton Sea Management Program website.

Mr. Hernandez stated that there is also a Long-Range Plan that looks beyond that first phase of that ten-year plan. Mr. Hernandez stated that the Long-Range Plan was developed several years ago with collaboration from different local agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, tribal communities and community members. A final plan was released last year. Mr. Hernandez also reported that a feasibility study is being led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, using the Long-Range Plan as a baseline for future Salton Sea conditions.

Mr. Hernandez discussed the next steps for the program. The Environmental Assessment is being completed with the Commitments Agreement to be able to implement the projects and obtain permits. Work is continuing with the landowners to accelerate the project implementation of the SCH Expansion with the federal funding and support is continuing for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the feasibility study for the long-term vision of the sea.

Member Estrada made a comment regarding the feasibility study by the Army Corps of Engineers, noting that the agreement has been executed and that the agreement has a budget in place and milestones. Member Estrada stated that the feasibility study is meant to take eight years, starting in 2022, with the final report in 2030. Member Estrada stated that the feasibility study has a budget of about \$16 million. Member Estrada stated that the agreement says that fifty percent of that is to be funded by the federal government and fifty percent of that by nonfederal government, hopefully from the State of California. Member Estrada stated that appropriations will be needed to support the study and keep it on course.

Member Ruiz asked for the projected cost once Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the SCH are completed. Mr. Hernandez stated that the state has invested about \$206 million for the 4,100-acre footprint. Mr. Hernandez stated that they don't have a total yet for the second phase, but that the \$255 million recently provided by the federal government could potentially be used for the expansion area. Mr. Hernandez stated that the project could cost a total of \$450 million, more or less.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth asked if vegetation is being planted or if it is more of an open-water habitat. Mr. Hernandez responded that perhaps both. There is riparian vegetation along the New River but most of the site will be open water.

ADMINISTRATION

Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2024 Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the August 14th, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Member Fisher moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Member Heidemann. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved.

2024 Board Work Plan Update

Establish an Interactive Annual Strategic and Budget Planning Process

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that staff would prepare an annual calendar for the Board, building around budget deadlines and incorporating Board priorities. The new process would begin in 2025.

Develop a Plan, Resources, and Tools to Ensure Effective and Ongoing Communications and Outreach

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the CRB website updates, including a new “California Colorado River Story” section, were estimated to be completed by second quarter of 2025. The staff was in the process of developing a duty statement for a mid-level Information Officer. She also reported that staff were not planning on setting a booth at the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) or the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) 2024 event due to the timing constraints but were working to have booths in their 2025 events.

Review Options to Optimize Board Meeting Frequency and Location

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that staff proposed three meeting locations: Coachella Valley, Inland Empire, or Redlands. Staff would prepare a draft 2025 meeting calendar for the Board to review in November.

Member Camacho suggested having the meeting at the Inland Empire Utilities Agency, which was 20 minutes’ drive from Ontario Airport.

Member Fisher mentioned that San Diego or Coachella Valley might be too far for the representatives from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Chairman Hamby stated that Ontario was a six-hour commute round trip and that a central meeting location would be ideal.

Member Joaquin stated that he was alright with Ontario or the Inland Empire.

Member Dockstader suggested having two meeting locations instead of one.

Establish a Calendar for Special Presentations and Speakers at Board Meetings

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported the Yuma area tour in November would have presentations from the Quechan Tribe and others. For the CRWUA events in December, Acting Executive Director Neuwerth suggested streamlining typical Board meeting topics and focusing on California's progress, leadership, and contributions to resolving Basinwide problems. She also reported that 2025 special presentation topics could include Mexican water management, Multi-Species Conservation Program habitat and species overview, Basin States hydrology workgroup update, Basin States speakers, drought impacts on power generation, and more.

Member Jones suggested conducting an outreach event in January, highlighting the importance of the Colorado River to California in light of unpredictable supplies on the State Water Project. Member Jones noted that the outreach could focus on steps agencies taken by the agencies in response to low State Water Project volumes and California continued commitment to securing alternative supplies through projects such as water recycling and potable reuse. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth agreed with Member Jones's suggestion and noted that January would be a good month for the event.

Member Ruiz also agreed with Member Jones's suggestion and emphasized the importance of telling the narrative story about California.

Coordinate to Appropriately Reestablish Agency Managers' Meetings

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth suggested holding an annual California agency managers and staff strategy meeting in conjunction with the annual Board workshop and asked the Board for feedback regarding goals, frequency, and attendance.

Member Jones mentioned that if the environmental bond measure on the November ballot was approved, that would be an excellent topic.

Mr. Zimmerman stated that agency manager meetings usually involved agency managers, technical staff, the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director of CRB, and served as a good platform to discuss ongoing issues. Member Fisher concurred with Mr. Zimmerman.

Evaluate and Optimize the Functions of the Six Agency Committee and the Colorado River Authority

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth suggested that agency managers discuss this at future agency managers' meetings.

Explore Future Opportunities for State Funding

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that staff were in the process investigating the timeline and process for requesting state funding and asked for the Board's input.

Ensure Regular Opportunities for Board Self-Evaluation

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth suggested incorporating self-evaluation into annual strategic and budget planning process with annual survey or annual workshop to discuss Board priorities and goals.

Member Fisher suggested seeking guidance from agencies regarding the goals and priorities.

LOCAL AND STATE WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORTS

Member Jones, representing the Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported on Water Year (WY) 2024, noting that in WY-2024 some areas had average to above average precipitation conditions, particularly in the South Coast region, stating that the Sierra Nevada area had drier conditions. She added that this is an important consideration with the start of the new water year, as it may impact runoff conditions next Spring. She stated that significant rainfall in the State will not occur until December, with a few storms occurring in October and November.

Chairman Hamby inquired about the State's temperatures during WY-2024 and how they compared to last water year and if temperatures impacted soil moisture conditions. Member Jones remarked that temperatures were hot during the summer, but not record setting. She stated that reduced runoff in snowmelt comes from two sources: a warming background and dry soil conditions at the beginning of runoff season. She stated that dry soil conditions exist in the Colorado River Basin.

Member Camcho, representing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that, as of October 1st, MWD's reservoir storage is 89% of capacity. The

Colorado River aqueduct will be on a seven-pump flow through the end of the year. Member Camacho reported that the 2024 diversion target is 956,000 AF and as of October 7th, MWD had diverted 682,3555 AF of water.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth wished the Board a Happy New Water Year, which started on October 1st. She reported that as of October 7th, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,577,71 feet with 9.11 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 39% of capacity. She reported that the water level at Lake Mead was 1,063.95 feet with 8.73 MAF of storage, or 33% of capacity. She reported that the total system storage was 25.07 MAF, or 43% of capacity, which is 133 KAF less than system storage at this time last year.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that as of October 1st, the WY-2024 preliminary observed inflow into Lake Powell is 7.98 MAF, or 83% of normal. She reported that the observed April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 5.33 MAF, or 83% of normal. She stated that the observed inflow into Lake Powell for September was 60% of normal and the October inflow forecast was 64% of normal.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported on the monthly precipitation conditions for August and September 2024. She reported that conditions in August were above average in the Upper Colorado Basin. She explained that precipitation conditions in September were very dry (0% to 30% of average) throughout most of the Colorado River Basin.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported on the August and September 24-Month Study for Lakes Powell and Mead. She explained that Lake Mead's projected most and minimum probable elevation change is significant due to IID's conservation and other system conservation programs. She noted that it is proof that California is contributing materially to the overall condition of the Basin.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that through the end of September, the Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs captured 86,641 AF and 52,017 AF respectively. She also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 18,423 AF, compared to 54,745 AF at this time last year. She stated that saline drainage bypass to the Cienga de Santa Clara is currently about 104,271 AF.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS STAFF REPORT

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) Work Group (Work Group) had a meeting to prepare for their upcoming Forum and Advisory Council meetings in Scottsdale.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) is expected to remove about 64,000 tons of salt in 2024. This is an increase from 2023, when the well was in shutdown for several months. Staff Member Rapoport reported that the seismic activity at PVU has reduced since the flurry of seismic activity detected in March of this year. Staff Member Rapoport added that the Work Group is still looking into longer-term options at the site, and CRB is pressing that those conversations continue with Reclamation and with the Forum.

Staff Member Rapoport reported on an update to the modeling of salinity concentrations and salinity loading in the watershed. The changes that Reclamation made in moving from CRSS Version 5 to Version 6 resulted in about a fifty percent change in the projected loading of salinity in the watershed. The change is primarily driven by updates to the agricultural diversions in the model. Those changes in diversions are resulting in reduced salt loading and higher flow in the river, the combination of which leads to less salinity loading. Staff Member Rapoport added that the change is affecting the modeling for projects downstream. Staff Member Rapoport added that Board staff are digging more into the details.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Salinity Control Fix Act is still moving forward. The legislation was being considered as part of the Farm Bill which is not going to move forward this year. Don Barnett, on behalf of the Forum, is still working to move the legislation forward, but it is unclear at the moment when the legislation will advance.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that research for the program is typically done by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and that they are working on projects for the next cycle. She asked Board members to share any research ideas with herself and David Rheinheimer, and they will share them with USGS and the Work Group. Aaron Mead with MWD is also the chair of the Work Group.

Mr. Cheng noted that despite the focus on the water supply and the negotiations, water quality and alternatives for PVU are important. Mr. Cheng asked whether the Board could provide an update on Paradox and water quality, because, in his opinion, the salinity issue is going to become even more critical. Chairman Hamby asked that this be added to our list.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that as one of the Forum members for California, PVU is one of her top priorities. She added that the program addresses both point

source and on-farm salinity control. She noted that at point sources such as Paradox, salt is removed directly from the system. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that on-farm projects, such as lining canals so water doesn't leach into the groundwater table and return with salt to the river, provide less verifiable salinity control. She added that the projects where salinity impacts can be quantified are of much higher value.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that she has been pushing for movement on PVU. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the main issue is that potential solutions are expensive and difficult. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that Reclamation completed an EIS for PVU but did not issue a Record of Decision because none of the alternatives were deemed acceptable. However, an alternative to the existing well is urgently needed because the well could be shut down by seismic activity at any time. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that she thinks that Reclamation is less enthusiastic about a PVU solution than the states because of concerns about the liability, the expense, and the long-term feasibility of any solution.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the program is currently analyzing whether groundwater interception at the top of the Paradox Valley could prevent subsurface saline flow into the river, but that there is unlikely to be a straightforward solution to salinity control in the area.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth suggested a broader update at a future meeting to dig into the options and get a fuller story from Reclamation or others.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the National Park Service released an Environmental Assessment for public comment. The proposed action is to potentially channelize the negative twelve-mile river mile slough to improve the flow through in the area. It would increase the velocity and cool the water down, hopefully reducing the need for flow experiments that are expensive to hydropower. The project is part of a larger plan to manage nonnative fish in the system. The comment period is open until October 14th.

MEMBER AGENCY REPORTS

Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)

CVWD representative Mr. Robert Cheng reported on CVWD's conservation activities, including short-term and longer-term actions. He described short term actions of replacement of facilities curtailment, including 9,000 acre-feet in 2022 under the 500+ Plan and 35,000 acre-feet per year in 2023 through 2025, or 105,000 acre-feet in total, under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). As a second short-term activity, Mr. Cheng reported that the CVWD board approved

entering into voluntary agreements for fallowing for up to two-and-a-half years, from mid-2024 through the end of 2026, and up to 30,000 acre-feet total. He reported that 1,778 acre-feet has been conserved through fallowing thus far.

For longer-term actions, Mr. Cheng reported that CVWD is working with Reclamation for IRA Bucket 2 funding of two projects. He reported that the first project was the wastewater reclamation plant, noting that the plant is expanding to provide up to an additional one million gallons per day of recycled water, or up to 1,120 acre-feet per year, for 30 years. He reported that the second program that CVWD applied for, a golf course, was not considered for funding.

Mr. Cheng reported on the Oasis In-Lieu Recharge Program, noting that CVWD is closing the project out this month and that it will provide up to 32,000 acre-feet annually, starting at around 10,000 to 15,000 acre-feet per year. He noted that this program will replace groundwater supplies with Colorado River water to help comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). He reported that the cost of this program is about \$52 million.

Mr. Cheng reported on CVWD's Mid-Canal Storage Program, which will remove the lining of a clayey, five-mile section of the Coachella Canal. He indicated that the clay caused problems for the lining, but that the clay alone would be able to achieve the same purpose as the lining. He noted that as part of this program CVWD has built a 730 acre-feet storage facility. He noted that this is a successful program through collaboration between CVWD, SDCWA, and Reclamation, and that funding was partly through a Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) loan.

Mr. Cheng reported that CVWD's board met yesterday and that the board approved the California Forbearance Agreement.

Mr. Cheng discussed the State Water Project (SWP), noting that DWR asked SWP participants to provide commitments from their boards before the end of the year for their willingness to fund the pre-construction activities for 2026 and 2027. Mr. Cheng reported that the CVWD board conditionally approved this commitment yesterday based on MWD's commitment. He noted that CVWD has earmarked \$11.3 million for this, contingent on the board decision.

Lastly, Mr. Cheng reported that CVWD is still working on its chromium-6 compliance, a decade-long process, noting that chromium-6 contamination impacts 34 out of one hundred wells and that it could cost as much as over half a billion dollars to resolve. He indicated that CVWD is still not sure how they are going to address the problem, but that they are exploring less expensive options. He noted that CVWD has three years to come into compliance.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Member Vigil reported that CDFW staff has been monitoring drinkers between the Colorado River and the Salton Sea during the past month due to excessive heat. He provided a general overview of drinkers and the drinker refill process, noting that CDFW staff refilled over 12,000 gallons. Member Vigil also reported that CDFW has been installing wildlife crossings at the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve, noting that they have had to rescue many deer from the canals and irrigation ditches. He reported that CDFW has installed its 45th crossing during the past month and has purchased material for 20 more.

California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Member Jones reported that DWR just completed a 3,400-acre habitat restoration project that has been underway for a couple of years, noting that the project also provides an additional 40,000 acre-feet of flood storage in the Yolo Bypass with funding from the Multi-Benefits Initiative. She noted that the primary target for the restoration is delta smelt. She also noted that it is a public-private partnership, indicating this is new for DWR.

Member Jones also reported that DWR has begun its normal flood emergency response grants totaling \$1.4 million to nine local flood control agencies.

Finally, Member Jones reported the commencement of construction of a new levee along the Pajaro River, which saw the biggest urban flood damage during the 2023 flood season, noting that it is a joint project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DWR, and the local community.

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Member Heidemann reported that SDCWA held its first annual state of the water press conference to communicate their efforts to improve local water supplies. He noted that in addition to topics such as the Quantification Settlement Agreement, the Claude "Bud" Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant, and local resource projects, they talked about supply management beneficial to both the State of California and, in particular, the Colorado River.

Member Heidemann then reported that SDCWA staff member Dennis Davis just completed the Water Education Foundation's 2024 Colorado River Water Leadership Program. He recognized Mr. Davis's efforts, noting that he and his cohort presented on water supply augmentation's role in addressing long-term challenges in the Colorado River Basin at the Colorado River Symposium in Santa Fe, and congratulated him and his colleagues.

Member Jones asked if SDCWA has a direct potable reuse project in the planning process. Member Heidemann and Ms. Alexi Schnell indicated that they did not aside from preliminary exploration.

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Member Dockstader reported on the development of a 35-acre riparian emergent wetland and native tree habitat pond, noting the recent installation of an earthen berm construction tile installation. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth asked what they were remediating for. Chair Hamby responded, noting that it serves multiple purposes and that it adds on to the Managed Marsh program, a part of the QSA mitigation.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)

Member Camacho reported on MWD's Climate Adaptation Master Plan, Camp for Water initiative. He reported that nearly 150 residents from across MWD's service area participated in the initiative's first public forum in September, indicating that it was a strong turnout. He reported that the group discussed regional approaches to address climate change in water planning.

Member Camacho reported a significant milestone in the Perris Valley Pipeline Project, with the completion of the final hole drilled by the tunnel boring machine. He noted that the project consists of 3,000 ft of tunneling and pipeline installation beneath Interstate 215 connecting two portions of existing pipe to expand water deliveries to Eastern and Western Municipal Water District and increase reliability to communities in the Inland Empire.

Lastly, Member Camacho reported that MWD will fund three research projects on forest restoration programs in the northern Sierra Nevada, the headwater of the State Water Project. He noted that this is a set of pilot studies funded through a funding model known as the Forest Resilience Bond, which is managed by the nonprofit Blue Forest. He noted that the project aims to better understand the effects of watershed health on water quality, water supply, habitat, carbon sequestration, and wildfire risk.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Basin States Update

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the October Board packet included a joint Lower Basin letter sent to the Reclamation Commissioner Touton on September 24th. The letter requests that Reclamation consult with the Lower Basin states as Reclamation and the Upper Colorado River Commission pursue a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that would allow the Upper Basin to store water in Upper Basin reservoirs, including Lake Powell. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan included provisions for creation of a Demand Management Storage Account in the Upper Basin, which requires Basin

State consultation on the creation, verification, and accounting of demand management storage water delivered to and stored in Lake Powell, given that water storage in Lake Powell could affect releases to Lake Mead. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that so far, the Lower Basin has not been included in the development of the MOU.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth also noted that the MOU would allow for Powell storage credit for conserved water supplies created using federal funds. This would represent a significant difference from operations in the Lower Basin, where Reclamation funding can only be used for creation of system water and not for storage credited to a state or user.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Basin States representatives are still meeting regularly. The Lower Basin states continue to refine elements of the Lower Basin proposed alternative, including storage provisions. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that discussions with the Upper Basin states on a consensus alternative have not been fruitful due to the Upper Basin's unwillingness to bear reductions.

Northeast Arizona India Water Rights Settlement Hearing

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that a hearing on the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement was held before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on September 25th. Testimony was provided by the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Department of the Interior. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that two Basin State senators are seated on the Committee: Senator Cortez Masto from Nevada and Senator Lujan from New Mexico.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the two major hurdles for the legislation are its price tag of approximately \$5 billion and the complexities of water accounting required to move water across Basin boundaries. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the settlement would allow for the leasing of Upper Basin Arizona water to parties on the Lower Basin mainstream in Arizona, which raises accounting concerns under the Colorado River Compact and the *Arizona v. California* Decree that administers Lower Basin water use. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth also noted that Utah has proposed adding a provision to the legislation that would authorize the interbasin water transfer necessary for Utah to deliver water via the Lake Powell Pipeline.

Yuma Area Update

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation held several webinars in September to update stakeholders on Yuma Area operations. Reclamation reported that it is drilling new wells in the Minute 242 wellfield expected to yield approximately 25,000 AF/yr, which will offset releases from Lake Mead for delivery to Mexico. Reclamation also reported that

it is updating guidance for the operation of the entire wellfield in an effort to reduce system wear-and-tear while minimizing overproduction from the wellfield.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation provided an overview of a pilot project modifying operations at Senator Wash and Brock Reservoirs, regulating reservoirs in the Yuma area. The pilot project aims to reduce combined storage at the two reservoirs by 1,500 AF, with the goal of increasing storage space to capture excess flows to Mexico, without negatively affecting local water delivery.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation also provided an update on its evaluation of potential new regulating reservoirs in the Yuma area. After an evaluation of nine options, Reclamation has identified two options that appear to have the most promise. The first would raise Imperial Dam by two feet, increasing the storage capacity by approximately 5,000-10,000 AF. The second is construction of a new offstream reservoir with a capacity of about 1,500-2,000 AF at a site in Arizona called Paradise Cove. Reclamation reported that an appraisal design study on these two options would be completed by May 2026.

Update on Bucket 1&2 Contracts

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that a signing ceremony was held on September 25th to celebrate the execution of several Bucket 1 and 2 contracts in the Lower Basin. Among the contracts were IID's conservation agreement, producing up to 700,000 AF between 2024-2026, and MWD in partnership with Bard Water District, producing up to 17,100 AF between 2024-2026. Reclamation also signed the first contract under Bucket 2 for long-term water conservation and announced that it is working with partners across the Lower Basin on additional Bucket 2 contracts.

Salton Sea Events

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that there were several Salton Sea events planned for October, including a groundbreaking for the expansion of the Species Conservation Habitat project on October 15th. She noted that Board members should have received an invitation to that event. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth also reported that the Salton Sea Summit would be held October 18-19 in Palm Desert.

Washington, D.C. Report

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth referred the Board to the Executive Director's report to review the Washington, D.C. Report.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Hamby reported that many Board members attended the Colorado River Symposium in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Several California stakeholders participated on panels.

Chairman Hamby reported that he had attended a MWD inspection trip the previous weekend, along with Member Cordero and MWD Director Ramos from Burbank. He noted that the tour included a museum with a California Department of Water Resources atlas from the 1970s, which stated that Southern California supported the State Water Project to “offset expected losses of Colorado River water and thus help to meet the needs of Southern California in the future.” Chairman Hamby noted that this underscores the longstanding connection between the Colorado River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board entered Executive Session at 11:52 a.m.

Pursuant to Section 11126, subdivision (a)(1) of the Government Code, an Executive Session was held to discuss the search for the Executive Director.

REGULAR SESSION

The Board resumed the regular session at 12:03 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 12:03 p.m.