

MINUTES OF MEETING
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Thursday, November 14, 2024

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Thursday, November 14, 2024, at U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Yuma Area Office, Conference Room 120, 7031 S Calle Agua Salada, Yuma, AZ 85364.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

Gloria Cordero (MWD)	Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)	Brad Robinson (PVID Alternate)
Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)	David Vigil (DFW Alternate Designee)
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)	

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)	Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)
Gina Dockstader (IID Alternate)	Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	Peter Nelson (CVWD)
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)	David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)	Frank Ruiz (Public Member)

Others Present:

Nick Bahr	Jason Rollo
Dennis Davis	Carrie Scott
JR Echard	Alexi Schnell
Ned Hyduke	Ed Smith
Eric Katz	Joseph Vanderhorst
Laura Lamdin	Shawn Weddle
Yuanyuan Myint	Jay Weiner
Jessica Neuwerth	Greg Widman
Patty Quilizapa	Jerry Zimmerman
Shana Rapoport	
Angela Rashid	
Rhian Reyes	
David Rheinheimer	

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m.

WELCOME FROM FORT YUMA QUECHAN INDIAN TRIBE

Member Joaquin, representing the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe, welcomed everyone for the Tour conducted the day before.

Chairman Hamby thanked the wonderful hospitality from the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe.

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 September 11, 2024, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the September 11th, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Vice Chairman Madaffer moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Member Cordero. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved.

Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2024, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the October 9th, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Vice Chairman Madaffer moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Member Cordero. 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 represented an annual calendar from January 2025 to July 2026 including budget deadlines and incorporating Board priorities. She proposed that to conduct another survey in January or February to get feedback from the Board on priorities, budget, and strategic vision. She stated that the survey result would help the discussion during the proposed Board retreat in March 2025. Staff could build the Board's priorities into the Six Agency Committee and the Colorado River Authority budgets, which would be presented in May

2025 and requested for approval in June 2025. Staff could have a budget check-in with the Board in September and February to make sure the budget was in-line with the Board's priorities.

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

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that CRB staff was working to update the CRB website. The goal was to have a new "California Colorado River Story" section. By the end of 2024, CRB would have a newly constructed website. The staff was in the process of developing a duty statement for a mid-level Information Officer.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth asked for ideas for Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) or the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) 2024.

Chairman Hamby mentioned that there might be a signing ceremony for Buket 2 contract for San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) during the December Board meeting.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth also reported that the plan to have a recognition for Camille Touton, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. Everyone was welcome to present a small gift to Mr. Touton. Chairman Hamby suggested that we could do something like what we did for Chris Harris retirement during the CRB meeting.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth suggested that we could have all agencies highlight their accomplishments for the past couple of years for the Agency Report section at the December Board meeting.

Member Jones suggested that we could do an outreach after the Federal government released their draft environmental documents.

Review Options to Optimize Board Meeting Frequency and Location

Chairman Hamby went through the proposed three options for meeting schedule and locations.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth added that we also built agency managers' meetings after some of our regular board meetings. The goal for the agency managers' meeting was to provide a venue for the agencies to meet and discuss California planning, California positions, and to prepare for basin states meetings.

Chairman Hamby recommended option A and asked if anyone had any questions.

Member Jones suggested having a hybrid of option A and option B, where we scheduled board meetings almost every month. If there was no need for the board meeting, we could cancel it or use it as an outreach event.

Member Cordero suggested establishing an ad hoc committee for the board. Chairman Hamby stated that the ad hoc committee would limit to two board members.

Mr. Eric Katz, the Board's counsel, stated that the ad hoc committee could include three or more board members if public notice was given.

Member Jones asked if three board members ad hoc committee meeting could be conducted remotely.

Mr. Katz explained that there were two ways to conduct meetings remotely. One way would need a quorum in person while the rest of board members could participate in meeting remotely without disclosing their location. Another way would need to be noticed and open to the public for every location where a board member would participate.

Chairman Hamby stated that maybe we could give a try the ad hoc committee. Any suggestions from the board members were welcomed and we could be discussed during the January 15th meeting.

Establish a Calendar for Special Presentations and Speakers at Board Meetings

Acting Executive Director reported the proposed special presentations topics for 2025 such as Mexican water management, Reclamation Upper Colorado Regional Director Wayne Pullan, Lower Colorado water quality, and 2024 California Environmental Bond.

Chairman Hamby suggested to have a place in the agenda.

Vice Chairman Madaffer suggested that a possible visit to the Navajo Nation.

Member Cordero mentioned few potential sites at Navajo nation and having meeting in Navajos could give visibility for Navajo's settlement.

Vice Chairman Madaffer suggested to invite Nevada, Arizona, and California at the Navajo meeting.

Coordinate to Appropriately Reestablish Agency Managers' Meetings

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that we proposed five agency managers' meetings for 2025 and could be scheduled after our board meetings with the goal of providing a

quorum for all our California stakeholders to discuss the most relevant topic. Board members' participation will have to follow Bagley-Keene guidance.

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 budget change proposals could be submitted in early September or early February for the following fiscal year and availabilities for state funding in the near term seems limited due to State budget constraints.

Ensure Regular Opportunities for Board Self-Evaluation

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that staff were planning incorporating self-evaluation into annual strategic and budget planning process with annual survey or annual workshop to discuss Board priorities and goals. Staff were also planning to have a mid-year check in the Board around October.

LOCAL AND STATE WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORTS

Member Jones, representing the Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that precipitation conditions in October were dry. She added that at the end of last year and beginning of the new water, the Sierra Nevada Mountains were generally drier compared to other areas of the state. She explained that this may result in dry soil conditions, impacting spring runoff. She reported that reservoir storage is good and is a holdover from the wet 2023 winter season.

Member Cordero, representing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that, as of November 1st, MWD's reserve storage was 89% of capacity. She added that the Colorado River Aqueduct will be on a seven-pump flow through the end of the year. The 2024 diversion target is 997,000 AF as of November 1st, and MWD has diverted 777,000 AF. Member Codereo reported that for the first three quarters of the year, deliveries were 91% of average and the 2024 delivery target for the Desert Water Agency and Coachella Valley Water District is 330,000 AF.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Staff Member Rashid reported that as of November 4th, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,576.91 feet with 9.05 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 39% of capacity. She reported

that the water level at Lake Mead was 1,061.17 feet with 8.51 MAF of storage, or 33% of capacity. She reported that the total system storage system was 24.77 MAF, or 42% of capacity, which is 188 KAF less than system storage at this time last year.

Staff Member Rashid reported that as of November 1st, the WY-2025 observed inflow into Lake Powell is 8.64 MAF, or 90% of normal. She reported that the observed April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 5.80 MAF, or 91% of normal. She stated that the observed inflow into Lake Powell for October was 64% of normal and the November inflow forecast was 96% of normal. She reported that WY-2025 precipitation to date 107% of average.

Staff Member Rashid reported that precipitation conditions in September were between 50% to 0% of average. She noted that conditions improved in October, particularly in the Four Corners region. Ms. Rashid reported that as of November 7th, SWE conditions in the Upper Colorado above Lake Powell were 142% of median.

Staff Member Rashid reported on the October 24-Month Study for Lakes Powell and Mead. She stated that the most probable release from Lake Powell will be 7.48 MAF for 2025 and 2026. She explained that there was also a 7.48 MAF release in 2024, and this would result in three back-to-back 7.48 MAF releases that would greatly impact Lake Mead. Ms. Rashid explained that the Lake Powell release projections changed as the forecasted inflow projections declined between the September and October 24-Month study.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth added that the August 24-Month study did not have a full estimate for Water Year 2026 release from Lake Powell and projected an Upper Elevation Balancing Tier, which is an 8.23 MAF release from Lake Powell, with potential balancing up to 9.0 MAF. She explained that the October 24-Month Study shows that Lake Powell's projected elevation has declined, and the release tier is the Middle Elevation Balancing Tier which has a 7.48 MAF release for 2026. Ms. Neuwerth displayed a graph that showed the increase of Lake Mead's elevation by 10 feet in the October 24-Month study due to the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) water conservation agreement. She explained, however, that the projected 7.48 MAF release from Lake Powell decreased Lake Mead's elevation by 8 feet. She added that snowpack projections will also impact the upcoming 24-Month study projections. Ms. Neuwerth also explained that the multiple 7.48 MAF releases will pull down the average for the rolling ten-year average release from Lake Powell, as some of the 9 MAF releases from 2014, 2015 and 2016 to get "bumped" off the rolling average. She stated that by 2026 or 2027, the rolling ten-year average could fall below 82.3 MAF combined over ten years.

Staff Member Rashid reported that through the end of October, the Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs captured 98,314 AF and 60,349 AF respectively. She also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 19,013 AF, compared to 54,870 AF at this time last year.

She stated that saline drainage bypass to the Cienga de Santa Clara is currently about 124,337 AF.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS STAFF REPORT

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) and Advisory Council met in October in Scottsdale, Arizona. Both the Forum and Advisory Council approved the submittal of letters to the Secretary of the Interior, requesting that the proposed Dolores National Monument, if designated, exclude areas necessary for potential future solutions for the Paradox Valley unit.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Forum received an update on the 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity, which will now be open to salinity control projects in the Lower Basin.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the future of the Salinity Control Fix Act was uncertain. The Act would modify the program's cost share structure, reducing the burden on the Lower Colorado River Development Fund. The Act had hoped to use the Farm Bill as a vehicle to pass through Congress, but the Farm Bill appeared to have stalled.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth also noted that several policy-level topics were teed up for future Salinity meetings including the future of the Paradox project, overall program funding, and program priorities.

Chairman Hamby reported that the meeting also included an interesting tour of central Arizona.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Glen Canyon Dam Program held a Technical Work Group (TWG) meeting virtually October 29th and 30th.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that much of the meeting focused on nonnative fish control below Glen Canyon Dam. Federal agencies, including Reclamation, the U.S. Geological Survey through their Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the National Park Service have all focused on trying to prevent smallmouth bass and other warm water nonnative fish from establishing a population below the dam.

Staff Member Rapoport stated that Reclamation has been running an experiment this summer to pass more cold water through the bypass tubes at quite an expense to hydropower. There has been additional monitoring as part of the experiment.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that monitoring efforts this year to date have resulted in catching 224 smallmouth bass. The furthest downstream capture is river mile 15, a bit further down than has been identified for most of the summer. Staff Member Rapoport added that there no age zero smallmouth bass have been identified, an indication that there has possibly been no breeding occurring during the summer of 2024. Other nonnative fish identified during this monitoring include walleye and numerous green sunfish.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the National Park Service has been working at the -12 Mile slough, a hotspot for breeding of warm water nonnative fish. Water is more stagnant at the slough, it gets warmer, and the lower velocity makes it a better spot for breeding. The National Park Service installed a net in the slough that seems to be pretty effective this summer. Staff Member Rapoport added that this is good news as there has been difficulties in previous years with holes and older nets being used. One smallmouth bass has been caught behind the net so far behind this summer.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that Reclamation has been running an experiment where they have been placing artificial nests around Lee's Ferry to see if they catch smallmouth bass, his is part of an effort to improve monitoring and see if smallmouth bass are attracted to those sites. Four artificial nest were placed in early July and monitored them throughout the summer. No signs of spawning were observed at those sites.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that longer term efforts are also being pursued. The National Park Service opened a public comment period for an environmental assessment to modify the -12 mile slough to increase the flow through the area, with an anticipated effect of increasing the velocity and cooling the water to make it less desirable for those fish. Staff Member Rapoport reported that the public comment period closed and that if the action is approved, the channelization work will likely occur between January and March of next year.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the other potential long-term effort being evaluated the potential for placing a thermal curtain above the dam by Reclamation. There are two goals in potentially placing the curtain- one to cool the water down slightly and the larger goal is to prevent fish that are in the upper layers of the reservoir from passing through the dam. Staff Member Rapoport added that installation of a thermal curtain would hopefully reduce the need for flow experiments.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the TWG received a report from the USFWS on humpback chub recovery. The USFWS convened a recovery team in January of 2023 that includes

all of the federal partners that are participating in the recovery efforts. This is a standard protocol under the Endangered Species Act, where they reevaluate things periodically. The recovery team is working to revise the species status assessment by 2025. As part of the process, the recovery plan and the recovery implementation strategy will be revised as well.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that a virtual meeting was held of the Leadership Team as a part of the planning and implementation process. The purpose of the meeting was to consider when to end cold water flow experiments this year. The recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior was to wait until the river from the dam to river mile 61 cooled to 15.5 degrees. Staff Member Rapoport added that some of the discussion during the consideration was around whether or not it should be turned off earlier when river mile 61 hit that temperature. Concern was expressed that this could adversely affect the data at the end of the experiment. The more conservative recommendation was what was sent forward. Staff Member Rapoport reported that the experiment is expected to conclude in the next couple weeks.

Member Cordero asked for a cost estimate of the experiment. Staff Member Rapoport responded that the most recent estimates she has heard are approximately \$17 million.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) held a Steering Committee meeting in Las Vegas on October 16th.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that, as has been reported here previously, the program acquired the Gabrych property and is moving forward with how to incorporate that site as part of the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve. Reclamation has been meeting with the Palo Verde Irrigation District regarding how to best fit the habitat into their community planning.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that on November 20th, there's going to be a House hearing regarding legislation to create an interest-bearing account for state funds contributed to the program. The funding schedule was set for the duration of the 50-year program and does not always lining up with when those funds need to be spent. There is an account solely comprised of funds contributed by the states that are not earning interest. Congress is considering legislation that would allow those funds to accrue interest. Staff Member Rapoport added that our Acting Executive Director Neuwerth is going to be testifying at that hearing next week.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Bureau of Reclamation has executed a contract to begin the environmental processes and fund the documents that will be needed for post-2026 operations. That will include a habitat conservation plan, a biological assessment, and our NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). Staff

Member Rapoport stated that we are very grateful to the Bureau of Reclamation for covering those costs.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that there was an exceedance of the LCR MSCP's incidental take permit in 2023. Two letters were included in the board meeting materials, one from Reclamation informing the USFWS of the take exceedance and one from the USFWS responding to the first letter that acknowledges the take exceedance and the corrective measures that have been put in place. Staff Member Rapoport stated that the flow exceedance was about 38,000 acre feet for federal fiscal year 2023. Two corrective measures are in place. A consultation was ongoing when the exceedance occurred to reconsider the Section 7 portion of the permit to increase coverage for flow reduction and add additional mitigation measures to compensate for flow reductions. The re-consultation was completed on April 8th providing for a higher level of coverage than in 2023. The second corrective measure put in place is for Reclamation to analyze processes for tracking how flows are reported, in coordination with the USFWS and all the parties of the LCR MSP. The conservation measures other work combined with the timing of the way the Reclamation is tracking how the flows are reported led to a perfect storm during FY 2023 where a lot of water was conserved, and it pushed us over the permit limit. Staff Member Rapoport added that we are very grateful that the USFWS has been cooperative and understanding of the ongoing efforts and seems to be satisfied with those corrective measures that are in place.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Steering Committee will hold a meeting at CRWUA on December 5th.

MEMBER AGENCY REPORTS

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Vice Chairman Madaffer reported on a water treatment plant for agricultural water in the City of Escondido, noting that it is the first ever facility in California solely for generating water for agriculture and that it is for the benefit of the region's farming community and to reduce demand on imported water supplies. He described the facility, highlighting that it uses reverse osmosis to treat ocean outfall, is a \$64 million project that produces 2 million gallons per day of water, and that it results in lower water rates for farmers and a revenue stream for the City of Escondido.

Vice Chairman Madaffer also reported that SDCWA recently elected Nick Serrano as its chair for the next two years.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Member Vigil reported that October continued to be dry, that drinker use continues to increase, that CDFW hauled 8,000 gallons in October to more remote areas, and that in September through October they hauled a total of 20,000 gallons.

California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Member Jones reported that there was a new California Endangered Species Act (CESA) incidental take permit for the State Water Project (SWP), noting that it covers five fish species. She also summarized the background context for this action.

Member Jones reported that California voters approved a \$10 billion climate bond that includes \$3.8 billion for water-related programs. She listed some specific allocations within this, highlighting that the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) also includes some funding, as well as some conservancies and others. Member Jones also reported on the timing of the funding process. She noted that while there are broader budget cuts in the state budget, larger state agencies have incorporated budgeting provisions to account for the potential passage of the climate bond. She further described the budgeting process over the next few months, indicating that by May there should be a better understanding of how much of the climate bond money will be available for the next fiscal year.

Member Jones emphasized to the Board that there are several grant programs in the bond from both DWR and SWRCB that the Board could potentially be an applicant for on behalf of some of its member agencies. She noted, as examples, that this could be for water conservation through DWR, or something related to salinity through SWRCB. She encouraged Board members to review the grant programs.

Chairman Hamby asked if Member Jones could give an example of a successful consortium that she's seen. Member Jones described projects under the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program as an example.

Member Jones further described the budgeting process for the climate bond, explaining that the bond's language is high level, and that the legislature increases the specificity of the scope of projects to be funded with bond money. She further explained that the agency receiving the money then creates a specific administrative program to allocate funds. Member Jones then explained that only the bond language is known at this point and that greater specificity will be available after the budget bill is passed.

Vice Chairman Madaffer asked if there is a particular lawmaker that the Board should be talking to. Member Jones replied that she is more familiar with the federal budget process. Chair Hamby noted that the assembly will change anyway. Member Jones replied that it would still be worthwhile if the Board can think of IRWM-like projects that could benefit multiple agencies, to

have conversations with people to encourage that kind of language in the budget bill. Vice Chairman Madaffer concurred, suggesting the board should try to put something together that would be beneficial not only to the river but the member agencies.

Member Jones stated that she was thinking of a project that is not currently being funded by the federal government but that would benefit the agencies.

Vice Chairman Madaffer asked for confirmation of his understanding of the budget development process, that the voters approved the measure, and that the legislature then decides how the budget works. Member Jones re-clarified what she previously stated, with some examples. She noted in particular that often agencies request for planning grants, since they may not have shovel-ready projects ready to implement under the particular funding program.

Chairman Hamby suggested further discussion in January.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth concurred and asked Member Jones about the timeframe.

Member Jones stated that the governor will make a budget proposal in January, and that the time frame is to see what's in the governor's proposal and then decide if they want to pursue something in the legislature. She then reiterated the idea of developing a regional project related to conservation of Colorado River water.

Chairman Hamby noted that one of the Board's statutory roles is to make recommendations to the legislature.

Vice Chairman Madaffer gave some general suggestions for what to do, including talking to the chair of the appropriations committee and others.

Member Jones noted that the board has little time.

Chairman Hamby mentioned that people are thinking about Bucket 2 proposals that were not accepted or other projects coming.

Member Jones suggested a "Bucket 3 proposal."

Chairman Hamby thanked Member Jones noting this will be on the agenda for January.

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Chairman Hamby reported on the groundbreaking ceremony on October 15, 2024 of the expansion of the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat. He noted those present, including Senator Alex Padilla, Congressman Raul Ruiz, Secretary of Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot,

Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy Samantha Arthur, and others. He stated that the event commemorated the remainder of the \$250 million allocated by Reclamation to the State of California for the Salton Sea Management Program under the Inflation Reduction Act. He also noted that the expansion adds 750 acres to the original 7,000-acre habitat, and that it will be formed at the southwestern corner of the Salton Sea.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Interim Period Conservation

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that in May 2023, the Lower Basin put together the Lower Basin Plan which was then accepted in Reclamation's May 2024 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. In the plan, the Lower Basin committed to creating up to 3 million acre feet of additional conserved water supplies above the commitments that are in the Drought Contingency Plan and the 2007 Interim Guidelines. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth added that the Lower Basin has been executing the Lower Basin Plan through Bucket 1 and Bucket 2 contracts. Reclamation reported in September that it has finished its Bucket 1 contracts and is moving on to Bucket 2. Acting Executive

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth provided an update on conservation in the Lower Basin in satisfaction of the Lower Basin Plan, noting that a list of the contracts and conservation is included in the Board packet. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that California's total estimated conservation between 2023 and 2026 is close to 2 million acre feet with approximately 1.25 million acre feet for Arizona and Nevada as well. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth added that the Lower Basin States are on track to meet the conservation targets in the Lower Basin Plan and the conservation is having a significant effect on Lake Mead.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Upper Basin is also distributing Bucket 1 and Bucket 2 funding. Their Bucket 1 is the Upper Basin System Conservation Pilot Program which has been extended. In 2024 the program allocated \$30 million to 114 projects with an expected yield of approximately 66,000 acre feet.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Upper Basin is soliciting proposals for their Bucket 2, divided into two separate phases: Bucket 2, Environmental Drought Mitigation (B2E), which is now open for projects that mitigate the environmental effects of drought, and Bucket 2 Water Conservation (B2W), for Upper Basin projects with verifiable multiyear reductions in use or demand.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that there are ongoing conversations regarding whether tribal, undeveloped, and unused water should be eligible for B2W funding.

Post-2026 Process Update

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that pm October 10th Reclamation held a public webinar on the status of the post-2026 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Reclamation reported on the alternatives and proposals received so far. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that having a draft EIS by the end of the year is no longer on the table. Reclamation is planning to release a matrix showing which alternatives they are moving forward for full consideration in the draft EIS before the Colorado River Water Users Association meeting. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that there will be a no-action alternative that Reclamation is calling the continued current strategies. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that she has also heard that Reclamation is putting an alternative with its existing federal authorities on the Colorado River, prioritizing infrastructure viability at Lake Powell.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth added that a recording of the webinar is available online. During the webinar, Reclamation went through the continued current strategies, the Upper Division Alternative, Lower Division Alternative, the Gila River Indian Community alternative and an alternative submitted by the non-governmental organizations.

Upper Basin Storage MOU

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth provided an update on the work towards an Upper Basin Storage Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) approved the MOU on October 28th. The MOU between the Upper Basin states and Reclamation would allow for what is being termed “provisional accounting” of Upper Basin water in Upper Basin reservoirs. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth added that the potential MOU appears vague. Qualifying activities include conservation projects that result in reductions in use or demand of water supplies, inform accounting procedures, or yield other helpful information.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin submitted a letter in September asking for consultation with the Upper Basin regarding the MOU. The Upper Basin provided a response letter that is included in the Board packet committing to consulting with the Lower Basin.

Minute Oversight Group

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported on the Minute Oversight Group meeting October 30th in Tijuana.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the United States committed to provide Mexico with an overview of the post-2026 alternative matrix within the next month. Mexico is very interested in knowing more about the alternatives moving forward in the EIS.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that Mexico reported that it is on track to conserve 133,000 acre feet in addition to its existing commitments under Minute 330 in 2024. Mexico committed to 400,000 acre feet of conservation between 2024 and 2026, in a parallel effort to the Lower Basin Plan.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth showed pictures of work being done by the Project Work Group including lining canals and upgrading structures to yield long-term conservation in Mexico.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Environmental Work Group has delivered about 127,000 acre feet of water to restoration areas in the Delta since 2017 to support approximately 1,350 acres of habitat.

Washington, D.C. Report

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth provided updates from Washington D.C.. There will be a Senate hearing and a House hearing on the LCR MSCP interest-bearing account. There is also an upcoming hearing to discuss the authorization of the system conservation pilot program in the Upper Basin.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Hamby reported on the Navajo settlement.

Chairman Hamby reported that there has been continued effort on the part of California agencies to coordinate with the Navajo, identify things that would work well for California and our agencies' interests. Chairman Hamby stated that the Navajo have been very responsive to meeting and understanding our state's needs and concerns.

Chairman Hamby stated that two days ago there was a meeting with the Navajo and Basin States in Phoenix. The Navajo are working diligently to try and get their water rights settlement completed in this legislative session. Chairman Hamby stated that he believes it is not likely, but that California is being very helpful, as are Arizona and Nevada. Chairman Hamby stated that the Upper Basin has been very creative in coming up with ways to say no to proposed solutions.

Ms. Shanti Rosset stated that she received an update this morning that a mark-up might occur this summer.

Chairman Hamby reported that throughout this process the Navajo have been interested in if California could be supportive of the legislation at this stage. Chairman Hamby stated that they have been very accommodating to all of California's requests and that with the support of the board and working with your agency managers, he would be interested in submitting a

supportive letter about the legislation while identifying some of the outstanding issues that we want to make sure are resolved.

Chairman Hamby stated that one of the outstanding issues, also shared by the State of Nevada, is the State of Utah's insistence that the Lake Powell pipeline be included. Nevada adamantly opposes the inclusion of that language into the settlement and if it were included would oppose the legislation as well. Chairman Hamby stated that California has similar concerns about the Lake Powell pipeline depleting even more Colorado River water at a time when we are supposed to be reducing our collective uses.

Chairman Hamby stated that he would be interested, assuming it's appropriate at that particular time, to be able to submit, at the appropriate time, support with our conditions that are being worked out now.

Chairman Hamby stated thanked the Board and stated that we'll work towards that and send it out at the appropriate time and shop it around with agencies for interpretation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board entered Executive Session at 11:40 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 12:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.