

MINUTES OF MEETING  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  
Wednesday, January 15, 2025

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2025, at Chino Hills Government Center, City Council Chambers, 14000 City Center Drive, Chino Hills, CA 91709.

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)	Peter Nelson (CVWD)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)	David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)
Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)	David Vigil (DFW Alternate Designee)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)	Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	Brad Robinson (PVID Alternate)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)	Frank Ruiz (Public Member)
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)	

Others Present:

Robert Cheng	Jason Rollo
Dennis Davis	Alexi Schnell
JR Echard	Tina Shields
Bill Hasencamp	Joseph Vanderhorst
Ned Hyduke	Jerry Zimmerman
Eric Katz	
Laura Lamdin	
Travis Moore	
Yuanyuan Myint	
Jessica Neuwerth	
Angela Rashid	

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:33 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 November 14, 2024, Board Meeting**

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

### **Consideration and Approval of Reimbursement for Travel Expenses of Interview Candidates for the Executive Director Position**

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve this item. Member Nelson moved to approve of the item, seconded by Member Cordero. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved. Member Vigil abstained.

### **2024 Board Work Plan Update**

#### ***Establish an Interactive Annual Strategic and Budget Planning Process***

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth shared an annual calendar from January 2025 to July 2026 including budget deadlines and incorporating Board priorities. Included in the calendar is a survey prior to gather feedback from the Board on priorities, budget, and strategic vision in preparation for a March 2025 Board retreat. She stated that CRB was in the process of hiring a facilitator to assist with the Board retreat in March. 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.

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

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that CRB was the first California Natural Resources Agency to have the new updated website. The new website was live, and the contents

would be updated in phases. CRB staff was developing a new section focused on “California’s Colorado River Story”. Acting Executive Director reported that CRB staff were exploring the option to add oral history interviews to the website. She proposed to add photos of Board members and alternates to the website. She reported that we were still working on hiring a mid-level Information Officer. She reported that CRB has been working on hiring a Retired Annuitant who could help in hiring various vacancies at CRB.

Member Heidemann liked the improvement made to the website.

Member Nelson liked the image of the quality and the landing page. He was glad to see CRB was moving forward with staffing vacancies positions.

#### *Establish a Calendar for Special Presentations and Speakers at Board Meetings*

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth presented the 2025 meeting schedule and locations. She stated that the potential agency managers meetings were built into the schedule. Acting Executive Director stated that she would continue to work on the special presentations list.

Chairman Hamby suggested to conduct a survey regarding the topics for special presentations.

Member Jones suggested conducting an outreach event in February.

Chairman Hamby asked if Member Jones could lead the outreach event. Member Jones and Member Cordero agreed to lead the outreach.

#### *Coordinate to Appropriately Reestablish Agency Managers’ Meetings*

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that four agency managers’ meetings were proposed in 2025 based on need. The goal was to provide a forum for California stakeholders to discuss the relevant and timely topics. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that work was underway to determine how to include all essential parties to the meeting under Bagley-Keene guidance.

Member Nelson asked Eric Katz, CRB council from the Department of Justice, if Mr. Katz could provide documentation explaining what constitutes a quorum for the board. Mr. Katz stated that he would send out communication to the board for the update. Mr. Katz explained that the issue of three board members is related to a committee set up by the board with specific directions. Chairman Hamby suggested that to discuss the option at our March board retreat.

Member Fisher emphasized the importance of including all agencies at basin states and lower basin states meetings.

Member Jones suggested involves the Council of State Governments West, which constitutes state legislatures of the western states.

Member Cordero stated that working with state legislatures and informing them more about Colorado River would help to make noise in the state of California.

Chairman Hamby suggest that CRB should develop a plan of engagement for outreach to the state legislature.

Member Cordero suggested improving engagement by the public and the board members.

Chairman Hamby asked Member Cordero if she could reach out to external affairs at MWD to seek advice on the concept of delegation for California. Member Cordero agreed.

*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.

Chairman Hamby suggested to have a discussion at the board retreat in March.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth mentioned that the funding agreement for SAC expires and would need to be renewed by July 2025.

*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, although the availability of state funding in the near term seem limited due to State budget constraints. She stated that opportunities for seeking Prop 4 climate bond funding were being evaluated.

*Ensure Regular Opportunities for Board Self-Evaluation*

Member Joaquin stated that there were many stories from different areas of California that could be told.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that staff were planning on 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 with the Board around October.

## **LOCAL AND STATE WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORTS**

Member Jones, representing the Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that as of January 4<sup>th</sup>, statewide precipitation was 115% of average. She reported that water year conditions are above average in northern California while it is exceptionally dry in southern California, adding that these conditions are a function of the location of the storm. She stated that reservoir storage is at or slightly above average. She stated that snowpack conditions as of January 5<sup>th</sup>, were 103% of normal and 41% of the April 1<sup>st</sup> average.

Member Pettijohn, representing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), reported that as of January 14<sup>th</sup>, the snowpack in the Eastern Sierra was 55% of normal and 28% of the April 1<sup>st</sup> normal. He noted that its service area should be receiving a good amount of rainfall over the next two months.

Member Cordero, representing The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), reported that as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, MWD's reserve storage was 94% of capacity. She stated that the Colorado River Aqueduct (CRA) will be on a five-pump flow for January and four-pump flow in February before it goes to zero-pump for most March for its annual CRA shutdown. She stated that MWD's 2025 diversion target is 1.432 MAF. She stated that deliveries to member agencies were 94% of the annual average and the 2024 delivery target for the Desert Water Agency and Coachella Valley Water District is 303,000 AF.

## **COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORT**

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that as of January 13<sup>th</sup>, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,570.25 feet with 8.54 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 37% of capacity. She reported that the water level at Lake Mead was 1,064.70 feet with 8.78 MAF of storage, or 34% of capacity. She reported that the total system storage system was 24.46 MAF, or 42% of capacity, which is 371 KAF less than system storage at this time last year.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that as of January 6<sup>th</sup>, the WY-2025 observed inflow into Lake Powell is 7.83 MAF, or 82% normal. She reported that the observed April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 5.15 MAF, or 81% of normal. She stated that the observed inflow into Lake Powell for December was 93% of normal and the January inflow forecast was 92% of normal. She reported that WY-2025 precipitation to date is 98% of normal and the current basin snowpack is 98% of normal.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that precipitation conditions during the last two months of the year were below average throughout most of the Basin. She reported on fall 2024 soil conditions, noting that conditions are drier than conditions in 2023, with exceptions in the San Juan and Gunnison River basins. She reported that snowpack conditions as of January 9<sup>th</sup>

ranged between 65% to 115% for the Upper Colorado River Basin and 0% to 10% in the Lower Colorado River Basin. She stated that SWE conditions in the Upper Colorado above Lake Powell is 94% of average.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported on the December 2024 24-Month Study for Lakes Powell and Mead. She stated that the November 24-Month Study projected a 7.48 MAF release from Lake Powell in Water Year 2026, which would have been the third consecutive 7.48 release and could potentially place the Upper Basin in noncompliance of compact releases from Lake Powell. She stated that the December 2024 24 Month Study now shows a projected release of 9 MAF from Lake Powell for 2026, with Lake Powell projected to fall in the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier. She stated that the 9 MAF release from Lake Powell is reflected in the Lake Mead's projected elevation with a Level 1 shortage tier.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Calendar Year 2024 (CY-2024) provisional year-to-date totals for Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs is 124,173 AF and 67,170 AF respectively. She also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 18,637 AF, compared to 55,976 AF at this time last year. She stated that saline drainage bypass to the Cienga de Santa Clara for CY-2024 is 145,299 AF.

## **MEMBER AGENCY REPORTS**

### **Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)**

Member Cordero reported that Board of The Metropolitan Water District (MWD) voted in December to provide additional funding for the planning costs for the Delta Conveyance Project. The MWD Board approved \$142 million, which will fund MWD's share of the environmental planning and pre-construction project costs for 2026 and 2027. Member Cordero added that the project now has the support of water districts serving more than half of the state and the majority of the state water contractors. Member Cordero stated that the Santa Clara Valley Water District just voted to support the project as well, making it the thirteenth agency that will have supported the planning for this project. Member Cordero added that the funding will complete the permitting and the planning work, bringing the project to a place where MWD and other participating agencies would vote on whether to proceed with the project or not.

Member Cordero reported that Governor Newsom met with MWD leadership prior to the vote and encouraged support for the project. Wade Crowfoot spoke at the MWD Board meeting and underscored the importance of moving forward with this project.

Member Cordero reported that in December the MWD Board authorized MWD to enter into an agreement with Reclamation to accept up to \$125 million in grant funding through the

WaterSMART large scale water recycling program. The funding will support the planning and the design of the Pure Water Southern California Program.

Member Cordero stated that Bill Hasencamp is in attendance if anyone wanted to hear information regarding MWD's operations with regards to the fires.

#### California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Member Vigil reported that California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) employees are still hauling water out in the desert for animals. CDFW brought 8,000 gallons in, bringing the current total up to 28,000 gallons.

Member Vigil reported that a couple weeks ago, CDFW had an opportunity to go out and restore a tanker, RB03, that was not holding water. CDFW was able to use some desert wildlife volunteers that came out with a backhoe and put in a new tank and got this drinker filled up. Member Vigil added that CDFW will be monitoring behavior in this area for the next 25 years.

Chairman Hamby inquired regarding the upper left image in the slide.

Member Vigil stated that the picture is of a rain mat that collects water when it rains and pours it into the drinker tank. Member Vigil added that CDFW put it concrete as part of a repair.

In response to a question from Chairman Hamby, Member Vigil noted that there are different reports on whether small game drinkers are safe for desert tortoise. Member Vigil added that CDFW has added a desert tortoise safe ramp so that they can't fall in and drown. Member Vigil added that rocks provide shade over the water so that it doesn't get covered in algae and the water quality is better for wildlife.

#### California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Member Jones reported that DWR has been performing seismic retrofits for Perris Lake for a while, noting that the project has three phases. She stated that the first phase began more than 10 years ago, and that in December DWR began construction on the second phase, an auxiliary release system for the reservoir estimated to cost about \$60-70 million. She then stated that there will be a third phase that involves an outlet tower. Member Jones provided some historical background, indicating that most of California's dams were constructed before about the 1970s, that at any given time there are about 40 to 50 with seismic-related restrictions, and that five of these are owned by PG&E and four each by Santa Clara Valley Water District and the City of San Diego.

### Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Member Dockstader reported that IID is in the middle of finishing the 2024 calendar year verification of its conservation and starting its 2025 solicitation for next year's irrigation program. She noted that IID hopes to start that program in February.

Member Dockstader reported that IID is cleaning its Galleano and Singh Reservoirs, noting that this will add 300 acre-feet of capacity and provide flexibility to growers as they implement their on-farm conservation programs. She further noted that this will help farmers reduce order time from 24 hours to 8 hours, which is helpful for both conservation and adhering to California labor laws, by allowing them to run their sprinklers during the daytime when it is more convenient. Member Dockstader also noted that the soil being dredged from the reservoirs is good quality and that there are farmers happy to use it on their fields, which reduces soil disposal costs.

### San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Member Heideman provided an update on the East County Advanced Water Purification Program, reminding board members that they toured the facility in the spring of 2023. Member Heideman reported that SDCWA has just completed forty-nine percent of the concrete and installed seventy percent of the pipeline. He also provided some technical context, noting that the project includes 50,000 cubic yards of concrete and 10 miles of water and wastewater pipelines, and that 3,500 feet was horizontally bored beneath the San Diego River. He also noted that the full build out will produce about 11.5 MGD, or thirty percent of East County's water demand. He noted that the project should be completed later in calendar year 2025 and be fully operational in 2026. Finally, he noted that the project will cost over \$900 million and that \$92 million will come from MWD.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### Post-2026 Alternatives

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Reclamation shared an overview of the proposed "Alternatives Report," previewing information about the alternatives Reclamation proposes to include in the forthcoming Post-2026 Guidelines Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation has proposed four action alternatives and a no-action alternative, choosing not to carry forward either the Lower Basin or Upper Basin alternatives. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that Reclamation combined components of both Basin's alternatives into a "Basin Hybrid" proposal, and included other components in the Federal Authorities, Federal Authorities Hybrid, or Cooperative Conservation alternatives. Both federal authorities

alternatives include Lower Basin reductions of up to 3.5 MAF, while the Basin Hybrid includes Lower Basin reductions of up to 2.1 MAF. All five alternatives have different proposals for managing Lake Powell releases, but all of them have frequent releases of less than 8.23 MAF, which is the Compact-required release from the dam. Several of the alternatives have minimum Powell releases of 5.0 MAF.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that some of the proposed alternatives include Upper Basin conservation, which in most cases is voluntarily conserved and stored in an account in Lake Powell. This stored water is converted into system water when the Lower Basin is taking larger reductions. The latest proposal from the Upper Basin has been included in the Basin Hybrid alternative, which shows the Upper Basin sharing one-third of the reductions beyond 1.5 MAF. This obligation would be reduced if the Upper Basin were experiencing “hydrologic shortages” greater than 1.5 MAF in any given year.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the alternatives report would serve as a memorandum from the outgoing administration to the new administration as the new administration develops the DEIS, which would likely be released in mid- or late-2025.

#### Lower Basin Alternative Updates

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that in December, the Lower Basin states submitted a request to Reclamation asking that they analyze the impact of a Compact Call in any of the alternatives that do not include the Lower Basin’s agreement to waive Compact compliance. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth noted that Compact compliance should be included as a reasonably foreseeable action that will have a significant impact on how the proposed Lake Powell operations perform.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth also reported that on January 13<sup>th</sup>, the Lower Basin states submitted to Reclamation a modification to the Lake Powell release curve in the Lower Basin alternative. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin’s initial Lake Powell release curve had been variable based on Upper Basin demand, but after feedback from Reclamation that this curve was not sufficiently protective of Lake Powell, the Lower Basin developed a new proposal. The Lower Basin’s updated Powell release curve is a modified version of the curve in the Basin Hybrid alternative, correcting for that curve’s Lake Powell bias. The modified Lower Basin Powell release curve ensures that both reservoirs have similar likelihood of reaching critically low elevations.

In response to a question from Member Heidemann, Chairman Hamby noted that Reclamation had not responded to the request to consider Compact curtailment, but the request could be incorporated in future steps in the NEPA process. Chairman Hamby noted that the Lower Basin states continue to be concerned that Reclamation’s modeling doesn’t adequately capture

the Upper Basin's obligations to the Lower Basin, instead shifting the burden of protecting critical elevations almost entirely to the Lower Basin. Chairman Hamby added that the goal was to get these concerns on the record for the incoming administration to consider as they move forward with the DEIS.

In response to a question from Member Jones, Acting Executive Director Neuwerth stated that Reclamation wanted any final proposals by May, in order to incorporate them into a DEIS that would be released before the end of 2025, but the timeline will depend on whether the new administration changes course, when a new Reclamation Commissioner is appointed, and other factors.

### Upper Basin Alternative Updates

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Upper Basin submitted modifications to their alternative in December. One proposed change was a modification to the Upper Basin's proposed Lake Powell release curve, lowering the minimum release to 5 MAF and increasing the maximum release to 12 MAF. The Upper Basin also proposed creation of two operationally neutral storage accounts in Lake Powell, one for conserved Upper Basin water, one for water released from Upper Colorado River Storage Project reservoirs. Water in these accounts would be converted into system water on a 1:2 ratio with the Lower Basin when reductions are greater than 1.5 MAF. However, this conversion would be reduced if the Upper Basin calculates that it has hydrologic shortages greater than 1.5 MAF in a year when reductions would be required.

### General Announcements and Updates

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation Lower Colorado Basin Regional Director Jaci Gould be retiring effective February 28<sup>th</sup>. Two new Lower Colorado Deputy Regional Directors have also been appointed: Genevieve Johnson and Christi David-Kernan.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the California Regional Water Quality Control Board's Colorado River Region was initiating California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) scoping for a proposed amendment to their water quality control plan for the Colorado River Basin region, which would designate the Salton Sea as an inland saline water habitat and not a freshwater water habitat.

### Washington, D.C. Report

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Colorado River Salinity Control Fix Act was passed in 2024, which will adjust the federal/non-federal cost share for the program and reduce expenditures from the overallocated Lower Basin Development Fund. Several other

pieces of legislation, such as the Northern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement and Upper Basin System Conservation Program Extension, did not pass and will have to be introduced in the next Congress.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Hamby reported that California had initiated some conversations with individual Upper Basin states in an effort to break the impasse between the Basins. California has held several small meetings with New Mexico and Wyoming to discuss process considerations for restarting Basin States discussions, as well as creative thinking on ways to reach a consensus agreement. In response to a question from Member Fisher, Chairman Hamby reported that plans to meet Utah and Colorado were in progress. Acting Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the meetings have been helpful in sharing perspectives and lowering the temperature of Basin State conversations.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board entered Executive Session at 12:30 p.m.

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

### **REGULAR SESSION**

The Board resumed the regular session at 3:20 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.