

MINUTES OF MEETING
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Tuesday, March 11, 2025

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at McLean Conference Room 10th Floor, 415 W. Ocean Blvd, Long Beach, CA 90802.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

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

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)	Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)
Castula Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	Brad Robinson (PVID Alternate)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)	

Others Present:

Dennis Davis	Yuanyuan Myint
Linda Bahr	Jessica Neuwerth
Nick Bahr	Jessica Rangel
Robert Cheng	Shana Rapoport
Mario Cordero	Alexi Schnell
JR Echard	Kevin Scott
Christopher Harris	Regan Shields
Ned Hyduke	Tina Shields
Orit Kalman	Eleanor Torres
Eric Katz	Joseph Vanderhorst
Laura Lamdin	Jerry Zimmerman
Aaron Mead	

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

WELCOME FROM THE PORT OF LONG BEACH

Member Cordero, representing the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), welcomed everyone and introduced Mario Cordero, Chief Executive Office of the Port of Long Beach, and Eleanor Torres, Managing Director, Strategic Advocacy of the Port of Long Beach.

Ms. Torres gave a presentation for overview of operation at the Port of Long Beach. She stated that the Port of Long Beach handled trade valued at more than \$300 billion annually and supports \$2.6 million trade-related jobs across the nation. The Port of Long Beach was founded in 1911 and encompasses 3,200 acres with 35 miles of waterfront, 10 piers, 80 berths and 72 gantry cranes. Ms. Torres presented the top five agricultural exports and their export destinations.

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 December 4, 2024, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the December 4th, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Member Fisher moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Vice Chairman Madaffer. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved.

Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of January 15, 2025, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the January 15th, 2025, Board meeting minutes. Member Fisher moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Vice Chairman Madaffer. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved.

2024 Board Work Plan Update

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth provided updates on various topics including but not limited to strategic and budget planning process, CRB website improvement, special presentations at future CRB meetings, and agency managers' meetings.

Appointment of Executive Director of Colorado River Board of California

Chairman Hamby gave an overview of the recruitment process status for Executive Director position and provided two names for the Board to select per Water Code section 12540. Vice Chairman Madaffer move to approve appointing Jessica Neuwerth as the new Executive Director, seconded by Member Pettijohn. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved.

Acting Executive Director Neuwerth accepted the Executive Director position and thanked the Board for the opportunity.

Board members and Mr. Christopher Harris, prior Executive Director of CRB, expressed congratulations.

LOCAL AND STATE WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORTS

Member Jones, representing the Department of Water Resources (DWR), reported that as of March 1st, statewide precipitation was 100% of average, noting that over the past decade, yearly precipitation has often been below average. She added that WY-2025 precipitation conditions have been below average in southern California. She reported that reservoir conditions remain steady. She explained that statewide snowpack is lagging behind average as of March 2nd. She reported that runoff forecasts over the season have begun to trend downward because of weak snowpack conditions, noting that runoff conditions in the southern Sierra are not doing as well as the northern Sierra.

Member Cordero reported that as of February 26th, the estimated Colorado River supply for 2025 is approximately 783,000 AF, including an estimated agricultural adjustment of negative 1,000 AF. She stated that the estimated State Water supply for 2025 is approximately 669,000 AF of supply, which is a 35% Table A allocation. She stated that the total supply estimate is 1.5 MAF. She stated that the current trend of MWD's demands is approximately 1.44 MAF for the year, with a surplus by approximately 18,000 AF. She reported that the Colorado River aqueduct is at a zero-pump flow for MWD's annual shutdown currently underway for the month of March. She added that at the beginning of April, MWD will ramp up its pumps to a five to seven-pump flow depending on the demands and divert 68,000 AF to 96,000 AF.

Member Pettijohn, representing the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), reported that as of March 10th, precipitation in the Eastern Sierra is 96% normal to date and 88% normal of April 1st.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER SUPPLY AND OPERATIONS REPORT

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that as of March 10th, the water level at Lake Powell was 3,561.68 feet with 7.91 million-acre feet (MAF) of storage, or 34% of capacity. She reported that the water level at Lake Mead was 1,067.99 feet with 9.04 MAF of storage, or 35% of capacity. She reported that the total system storage system was 24.11 MAF, or 41% of capacity, which is 687 KAF less than system storage at this time last year.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that as of March 5th, the WY-2025 observed inflow into Lake Powell is 6.77 MAF, or 71% normal. She reported that the observed April to July inflow into Lake Powell is 4.30 MAF, or 67% of normal. She stated that the observed inflow into Lake Powell for February was 84% of normal and the March inflow forecast was 70% of normal. She reported that WY-2025 precipitation to date is 93% normal and the current basin snowpack is 91% of normal.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that dry precipitation conditions in the Basin have persisted over the last four months. She stated that in February conditions improved in the northern reaches of the Colorado River Basin. She reported that many SNOTEL locations in the Upper Basin reported conditions that were the driest on record between December and February. She reported on March 1st snowpack conditions were near or a record low. As of March 6th, SWE conditions were 88% of normal.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported on the January 2024 24-Month Study for Lakes Powell and Mead. She stated that Lake Powell inflows are continuing to decline and the projected operations for Lake Powell have been declining as well. She stated that the projections indicate that Lake Powell will likely operate in the Mid-Elevation release in 2026, with a release of 7.48 MAF from Lake Powell. She stated that this release could cause the Upper Basin to fall below what the Lower Basin considers to be the Colorado River Compact's rolling average of 82.3 MAF over ten years. She reported that the Lower Basin states have begun to have discussions about these issues and preparing how the Lower Basin wants to approach the development of the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for 2026, which will start this summer.

Executive Director Neuwerth explained the impact of the 7.48 MAF on Lake Mead, stating that its elevation is projected to hover above 1,050 feet over the next couple of years, noting that California is required to make contributions at elevation 1,045 feet under the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP). She explained that the goal is to keep Lake Mead's elevation above this limit which involves implementing all the Lower Basin conservation under the Lower Basin Plan. She stated that without additional conservation Lake Mead will continue to decline.

Member Nelson inquired about when the Upper Basin would violate its compact obligation. Executive Director Neuwerth commented that Upper Basin could be out of

compliance by the end of calendar year 2026. She explained that in 2014, 2015 and 2016, there were 9 MAF releases from Lake Powell, which have now been replaced in the rolling 10-year average with several recent years of 7.48 MAF releases. Member Jones remarked that this issue may serve as an excellent topic for developing public outreach this year.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Calendar Year 2025 (CY-2025) provisional year-to-date totals for Brock and Senator Wash regulating reservoirs is 16,795 AF and 12,926 AF respectively. She also reported that excess deliveries to Mexico were 391 AF, compared to 8,506 AF at this time last year. She stated that saline drainage bypass to the Cienga de Santa Clara is 19,819 AF through March 5th.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAMS STAFF REPORTS

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Salinity Control Program scheduled a Work Group meeting for April 28th in Salt Lake City, Utah. Staff Member Rapoport added that Work Group members were informed that all of the meeting dates currently scheduled were tentative and that, if held in person, could very likely get moved to virtual meetings due to the travel restrictions and credit card issues that the agencies are experiencing at the moment.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program's (GCDAMP) Annual Reporting meeting scheduled for the first week in February which was to be followed by a Technical Work Group meeting were rescheduled. The Annual Reporting Meeting was tentatively rescheduled for April 8th and 9th, and the Technical Work Group meeting was tentatively rescheduled for April 10th, both to hold virtually.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Adaptive Management Work Group meeting scheduled for February has been moved to May 14th and 15th as a virtual meeting as well.

Staff Member Rapoport stated that while those meetings have been postponed and there is limited information sharing that can be done by the federal agencies, the program is discussing upcoming recommendations regarding potential experimental flows from Glen Canyon Dam in the coming year. The two experiments under consideration are a Spring High-Flow Experiment (HFE), the purpose of which would be to move the sediment downstream from the dam to rebuild beaches for the recreational users and habitat. Staff Member Rapoport reported that a sediment trigger to potentially conduct an HFE was met in the fall and a decision was made to defer a potential experiment to the spring. Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Planning and Implementation Team is weighing the decision now regarding what kind of recommendation to

make to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary has the ultimate decision power over whether or not an experiment will occur.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that simultaneously, the Planning and Implementation Team is considering whether or not to recommend another smallmouth bass flow this year. Staff Member Rapoport stated that smallmouth bass flows are designed to protect the endangered species below the dam. Smallmouth bass are a warm water invasive fish present in Lake Powell and more have been seen passing through the dam as the reservoir has declined. The flow experiment is designed to push colder water through the bypass tubes in order to cool the river.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that while the GCDAMP has not yet received all of the data from the previous experiment, it appears there was no spawning of smallmouth bass in 2024. Staff Member Rapoport stated that this suggests the experiment was quite successful but was also a great expense to hydropower in pushing that water through the bypass tubes instead of the hydropower jet tubes. Staff Member Rapoport added that there are likely to be some pretty difficult conversations coming up, particularly with the new energy executive orders.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) held a Financial Work Group meeting on February 27th.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the LCR MSCP is on schedule in purchasing and building habitat. Staff Member Rapoport showed a slide with some of the costs. The 2024 budget was \$32.7 million. The program was quite a bit over budget in expenditure, spending \$50.4 million. The large bulk of the increased expense resulted from purchasing the Gabrych property which is going to become part of the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve. Staff Member Rapoport stated that the purchase cost the program \$25.5 million. The property is anticipated to meet the final acquisition needs, possibly including post-2026, for the program.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that some Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds that the program obtained did reduce some costs at habitat restoration sites. The LCR MSCP obtained BIL funds for Yuma Meadows and Section 2026 habitat restoration sites.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the LCR MSCP Technical Work Group (LCR MSCP TWG), which usually meets once or twice a year, has started holding monthly meetings to prepare for the post-2026 process. The LCR MSCP TWG held virtual meetings January 15th and February 19th. The LCR MSCP TWG is currently considering the nonflow actions that may need coverage in the future. Staff Member Rapoport stated that California is not anticipating experiencing changes to its nonflow coverage needs for the upcoming permit but that some of the other states are seeing changes that the program is looking to incorporate.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the LCR MSCP TWG is also looking at species that may need to be added to the program in the future. At the federal level, there are potential listings coming up for new species and California specific is currently considering a potential burrowing owl listing.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the LCR MSCP TWG is also discussing the reduction in flow coverage that might be needed in order to comply with post-2026 guidelines.

Staff Member Rapoport stated that the next LCR MSCP TWG meeting would be March 19th and the next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for April 23rd. Staff Member Rapoport added that the Steering Committee meeting is scheduled to be in person but may be moved to virtual.

MEMBER AGENCY REPORTS

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Member Vigil reported that CDFW planted wheat in upland game fields at the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve this year, providing a full season of wheat for this year's dove hunters.

Member Vigil reported that CDFW completed another guzzler enhancement around the Chiriaco Summit area and that CDFW was continuing to haul water. The past weekend CDFW and Desert Wildlife Unlimited hauled 29,000 gallons to these guzzlers. Footage from cameras on the guzzlers is finding a lot of activity from birds and different critters. Member Vigil showed pictures, including a badger and a bobcat.

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Vice Chairman Madaffer thanked Member Cordero and MWD for hosting the meeting.

Vice Chairman Madaffer provided an update on a restoration of SDCWA's main pipe, a historic piece of infrastructure built in the 1940's that moves water to San Diego from Lake Skinner. Vice Chairman Madaffer reported that the project was about halfway to completion and would cost approximately \$66 million.

Vice Chairman Madaffer reported that during the annual CalDesal Conference, a national scientific study was released that found that Carlsbad Desalinization Plant is producing environmentally conscientious water supplies. The study evaluated four years of environmental monitoring, highlighting comprehensive monitoring in place for desal plants in California, and showed that the nation's largest desalinization plant, the Carlsbad plant, is not only in compliance

but has no detectable issues. Vice Chairman Madaffer added that he found this highly important because the biggest objection to desalinization plants has been marine issues.

California Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Member Jones reported on the State's continued response to the wildfires that occurred in January. She stated while the fires were burning DWR sent staff to work with the Burned Area Emergency Response team, led by the Forest Service and CAL Fire, to analyze impacted watersheds. She stated that DWR had thirty staff assigned to immediate aftermath cleanup. She reported that DWR also supervised California Conservation Corp (CCC) crews, which are doing all the labor to protect the watershed, such as shoring up areas to prevent debris flow. She added that debris flows were an issue after the 2018 wildfire near Santa Barbara. She stated that DWR staff are integrated into the State Operations Center to monitor the potential of debris flows during storm events.

Member Jones reported that the State Water Project (SWP) allocation was increased. She explained that by December, DWR is required to release its initial allocation, but because this initial allocation is only based on reservoir storage, the number is usually low. She stated that the allocation usually increases if snowpack accumulates and there is a better sense of the winter's precipitation conditions. She stated that lately a typical allocation may be 40% or 50%, adding that a 100% allocation is very rare because the contractual provisions that date back to the 1960s that required the development of additional SWP facilities, reservoirs and a canal around the Delta. In addition, climate change is affecting runoff patterns. She added that the allocation is based on a ninety percent exceedance level on a forecast. Member Nelson asked about the near average to above average capacity of the San Luis and Oroville reservoirs and whether it impacts the SWP allocation. Member Jones stated that the amount of snowpack impacts the allocation and noted that the water in Oroville is already spoken for because it must include the carryover storage for environmental flows.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)

Member Cordero highlighted MWD's partnership effort with the Palo Verde Irrigation District. She stated that MWD is appreciative of the efforts at keeping its partnership strong. She also reported on MWD's efforts to lower water use. She stated that in 2023, water use was 114 gallons per capita per day, which is due to MWD's \$1 billion investments in conservation efforts.

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Ms. Tina Shields, Water Department Manager of IID, reported that IID initiated its solicitation process for its second Deficit Irrigation Program, which will extend through the middle of next month. She stated that IID will have a consultation process with wildlife agencies related

to the participation levels and its impact on the pupfish, which is an endangered species. She reported that IID's System Conservation Implementation Agreement (SCIA) funding from Reclamation has been reassured by the new administration. She stated that it will be interesting to see which fields participate for the second year and whether there is any crop damage. Ms. Shields also showed a video of a sluicing event that is conducted monthly at Imperial Dam. She reported that the sluicing is done every month to move sediment downstream and the flow is about 12,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). She added that an alarm is sounded thirty minutes prior, ten minutes prior, and then during the first five minutes to alert people to get out of the way. She reported that IID recently replaced eight to ten of the sluicing gates as part of a multi-year project from 2017 to 2019 in partnership with some of the Yuma area water districts which share facilities. She added that IID cost shares with the other districts to maintain the facilities, stating that IID funds about 75% and other agencies in Coachella fund the 25% balance. She reported that IID is also working to replace the sludge pipes under the sedimentation basin, which are about sixty years old.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Post-2026 Alternatives

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that on January 17th, Reclamation published an Alternative Report, documenting the alternatives that could be carried forward in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Post-2026 Colorado River Operations. The Upper Basin and Lower Basin alternatives, released in 2024, were both excluded from the report. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin sent a letter to the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) Burgum on February 13th, laying out the issues the Lower Basin sees with the identified alternatives. The most critical issue was the failure to include Compact compliant releases in any of the proposed alternatives. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation is also improperly relying exclusively on decreased downstream releases to protect the elevation of Lake Powell, rather than considering upstream activities or infrastructure fixes at the facility. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the Lower Basin wanted to get their concerns in front of the new administration as it begins appointing leadership at the Department of the Interior.

General Announcements and Updates

In response to a question from Member Nelson, Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Colorado River operations have been impacted by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) measures. Funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act was frozen in January, affecting the Bucket 1 and Bucket 2 conservation projects in the Lower Basin. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin's six senators signed a letter

requesting that those funds be unfrozen, and Reclamation staff reported that projects with fully executed agreements would be moving forward.

Executive Director Neuwerth also reported that Reclamation has seen significant staffing impacts as a result of reduction-in-force efforts across the federal government. Notably, the Lower Colorado Regional Director Jaci Gould and Deputy Regional Director Stacey Wade both retired within the last month, and it was unclear when or if those positions could be refilled. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Board submitted a letter to the Secretary, emphasizing the professionalism and importance of Reclamation staff. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that California's senators also signed a letter requesting the cautious use of reduction-in-force efforts for Reclamation staff. Staff Member Rapoport reported that significant staffing losses have been seen at the Western Area Power Administration, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Member Jones reported that Reclamation's California-Great Basin Regional Director, Karl Stock, was removed from his position, as well as the director of the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Lab and other critical staff.

Mr. Harris noted that Andrea Travnicek, a veteran of the first Trump administration, had been nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary for Water and Science. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that a nominee for Reclamation Commissioner may not be announced until Ms. Travnicek is confirmed in her role. Mr. Harris also reported on the recent passing of former CILA Commissioner Roberto Salmon.

Washington, D.C. Report

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that several Colorado River-related bills that didn't successfully pass in the past Congress have now been reintroduced. Among them are a bill introduced by California's Rep. Ken Calvert and Sen. Alex Padilla that would establish an interest-bearing account for unspent nonfederal LCR MSCP funds, to help those funds maintain their value until they're needed for program implementation.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Wyoming's Rep. Hageman had introduced a bill that would require Reclamation and the Department of Energy to consult on the impact of smallmouth bass flows on the generation of hydropower at Glen Canyon Dam. Executive Director Neuwerth also noted that a bill extending the Upper Basin System Conservation Program through 2026 had also been reintroduced.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Hamby reported that Senator Schiff visited the Imperial Valley and Salton Sea in one of his recent trips to California, and that staff were providing regular updates to California's

Senate staff members on the current status of Basin negotiations. Chairman Hamby also reported that he had recently presented at a conference in Yuma alongside Arizona's Tom Buschatzke.

Chairman Hamby noted that the Basin States process had been particularly active in recent months. Chairman Hamby and New Mexico's Estevan Lopez were serving as co-chairs of the Basin States process.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 3:21 p.m.