

MINUTES OF MEETING
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, May 14, 2025

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at Monterey City Hall, Council Chambers, 580 Pacific Street, Monterey, CA 93940.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

Gina Dockstader (IID Alternate)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)
Jeanine Jones (DWR Designee)

Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
Peter Nelson (CVWD)
David Vigil (DFW Alternate Designee)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)
Gloria Cordero (MWD)
Castula Estrada (CVWD Alternate)
Dana B. Fisher, Jr. (PVID)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)
Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)

Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)
David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)
Brad Robinson (PVID Alternate)
Frank Ruiz (Public Member)

Others Present:

Fernando Castro Alvarez
Dennis Davis
David De Jesus
Linda Bahr
Nick Bahr
Robert Cheng
Eric Katz
Kara Mathews
Yuanyuan Myint

Jessica Neuwerth
Meggan Quarles
Shana Rapoport
Mark Robak
Eric Ruckdaschel
Alexi Schnell
Joseph Vanderhorst
Mike Wade
Meena Westford

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hamby announced no presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:08 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.

REPORTS

Water Supply and Operations Report

Executive Director Neuwerth directed the Board members to review the Basin, State and Local Water Report memorandum in the Board folder. She explained that in lieu of providing an extensive presentation on water supply conditions, CRB staff developed a memorandum to provide in-depth water supply information. She reported that winter precipitation conditions were below average and Basin snowpack conditions were 62% of average. She stated that total system storage has declined by one-million-acre feet since last water year, despite conservation efforts of the Lower Basin. She reported that the capacity elevation for Lake Powell and Lake Mead was 3,557.86 feet (33% of capacity) and 1,061.43 feet (33% of capacity), respectively. She reported that according to the April 24 Month Study, the most probable release from Lake Powell is 7.48 MAF in Water Year 2025 (WY-2025) and Water Year 2026 (WY-2026), noting that the 7.48 MAF release will impact the elevation of Lake Mead.

Colorado River Basin Programs Report

Colorado River Basin Programs

Staff Member Rapoport reported that, as requested by Board members, a memo is included in the meeting packet providing a report on activities and updates pertaining to programs in the Colorado River Basin. Staff Member Rapoport provided an opportunity for Board members to ask question.

Staff Member Rapoport reported on highlights from the memo.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that due to the current federal cuts, federal agencies are losing staff and that the Colorado River Salinity Control Program has been particularly hard

hit. Both staff members at the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) have departed. Reclamation has assigned staff that are also working on the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program to fill those positions. Staff Member Rapoport reported that current staffing could affect whether or not there is a Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council meeting held along with the upcoming Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum meeting.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program's Planning and Implementation Team recommended to the Secretary of the Interior that a High-Flow Experiment (HFE) not be conducted this spring and that, for accounting purposes, the sediment be rolled over to the fall for consideration of a fall HFE. Staff Member Rapoport added that a similar decision was made last fall.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Planning and Implementation Team is currently considering whether or not to recommend conducting another Cool Mix Flow experiment this year. The first Cool Mix Flow experiment was conducted last year. The purpose of those experiments is to cool the river down to try and prevent smallmouth bass and other warm water invasives from breeding and potentially eating the endangered fish, including humpback chub. Staff Member Rapoport reported that the experiment appears to have been successful last year but at great expense to hydropower.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the Audubon Society officially became a member of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) Steering Committee in the prior month.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that Terry Murphy, the LCR MSCP Program Manager, left the program after more than thirty years with Reclamation. Staff Member Rapoport reported that Carrie Ronning is the current acting program manager the position will cycle among Reclamation staff for the foreseeable future.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that Reclamation submitted a white paper the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on behalf of the LCR MSCP explaining an exceedance of the program's take limits (water usage) that occurred in 2023. Staff Member Rapoport added that all the conservation efforts affected the LCR MSCP permit. The white paper documented the factors contributing to exceedance as well as new protocols that are in place to prevent future exceedances. Staff Member Rapoport added that the permit has been revised such that future exceedances are not anticipated. Board members received a copy of the white paper.

Executive Director Neuwerth added that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been a really good partner in working through the issue.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the two agencies that implement the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service, issued a notice in the Federal Register to potentially change the definition of habitat in the Endangered Species Act. Staff Member Rapoport stated that the rule making could have widespread implications for the LCR MSCP and any Endangered Species Act permits at the federal level.

The California Legislature is currently considering Assembly Bill 1319 to look at adding additional protection for federal species that may lose federal protection to ensure they are protected in California.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that Board staff are closely monitoring both of these items.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that the key item staff are currently focused on in Glen Canyon is the potential for Cool Mix flows to occur this coming summer. Smallmouth bass could significantly impact the humpback chub that are in the Glen Canyon region, which could lead to additional limits on how much flexibility there is with the Glen Canyon Dam release. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that staff are working with the basin states toward some kind of potential consensus recommendation for a smallmouth bass flow that is acceptable to the hydropower representatives.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that on the LCR MSCP side, Board staff are closely monitoring for effects from the reduction in staff on the functioning of the program. Executive Director Neuwerth added that Reclamation has lost approximately twenty-five percent of the LCR MSCP staff and has relayed that that the reduction may affect the work that can be done in the coming fiscal year. The LCR MSCP is a joint state-federal project using joint state-federal money and is staffed by Reclamation. There is concern about both the functioning of the program and whether the federal funding commitment is going to be met. The federal government contributes fifty percent of funding for the LCR MSCP.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Basin States were meeting regularly to discuss post-2026 operations. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the Basin States would need to reach consensus within the next month for inclusion in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Post-2026 Operations. If that can't be accomplished, the Basin States would aim for draft EIS alternatives that are broad enough to encompass the terms of a wide variety of

potential agreements, while working on a consensus proposal that could be included in the final EIS.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the 1944 Water Treaty with Mexico that establishes Mexico's allocation on the Colorado River also covers the Rio Grande. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that in April, the Trump Administration denied Mexico's request to receive some of its Colorado River allocation in Tijuana, in an effort to prompt Mexico to increase releases to Texas on the Rio Grande. Executive Director Neuwerth raised concerns that this action blurs the line that the Basin States have long advocated to maintain between the two river basins. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that the Lower Basin is advocating for Mexico to take reductions in parity with U.S. users, and there is concern whether issues on the Rio Grande could spill over into the Colorado River Basin, potentially further complicating difficult negotiations.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation is estimated to have lost about 25% of its workforce in recent federal staffing cuts, with potential additional reductions in force on the horizon. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that in February, the Colorado River Board submitted a letter to Interior Secretary Burgum, requesting caution in staffing cuts to Reclamation.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Andrea Travnicek, the nominee for Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, was confirmed in a hearing before a Senate subcommittee the previous week. Ms. Travnicek has worked in natural resources management in North Dakota under then-Governor Burgum and also served in the first Trump administration. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that once her nomination moves forward, a nomination for Reclamation Commissioner is expected.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of the March 11, 2025, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby stated that the Board will skip this item due to lack of presence of a quorum.

Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of the March 12, 2025, Board Meeting

Chairman Hamby stated that the Board will skip this item due to lack of presence of a quorum.

Presentation of Draft Colorado River Board of California FY 2025-2026 Budget

Executive Director Neuwerth provided an overview of the draft budget and stated there was a three percent increase from the prior fiscal year.

Chairman Hamby noted that the Six Agency Committee funds CRB's budget and the cost share agreement for the SAC expires this year. The general managers met and discussed. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has requested a reduction of its cost share percentage moving forward. Chairman Hamby recommended the Board members discuss with each agency's general manager regarding this matter.

Vice Chairman Madaffer, Chairman Hamby, Member Nelson expressed their represented agencies would like to remain the same percentage.

Member Agency and Public Member Reports

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Member Dockstader reported that IID, as well as Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), has been counting burrowing owls in the Imperial Valley out of concern that they may be listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Board Member Dockstader played a video, in which Ms. Brooke Goodsell, an environmental specialist in the Environmental Mitigation Unit at IID discussed burrowing owls and IID's actions to help monitor and protect them. Ms. Goodsell explained that IID marks burrows with a stake or pin flag and trains workers to avoid the owls and not destroy their burrows. Ms. Goodsell also noted that burrowing owls are listed as a species of special concern in the State of California, and that they are a candidate species to be listed as threatened or endangered under CESA. Member Dockstader continued, noting that IID is hoping to use counting to show that they should not be listed as endangered.

Executive Director Neuwerth inquired about the time frame of making a listing decision. General discussion followed. Member Vigil (of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife) indicated that he was not sure. Chairman Hamby noted that while he doesn't know the time frame, there was a petition received by the Fish and Game Commission that was focused on other areas of the state. Chairman Hamby further noted that their population is not a concern in Imperial County since they thrive in the agricultural areas, whose drains and canals provide shelter, and which provide bugs and rodents to eat. Mr. Katz noted that the typical timeline is one year after the candidacy decision is made, and that it can be extended by six months and the timelines are not always strictly adhered to. Member Dockstader recalled that they would try to finish their determination decision by the end of this year, and that IID is hoping that any listing would be confined to certain areas rather than the state as a whole. Additional minor discussion around this idea followed, with some noting that localized listings are common.

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Vice Chairman Madaffer reported that SDCWA was recently involved in a wetland restoration project that returned tidal flows to an estuary in the south part of San Diego Bay,

noting that this was as part of the environmental mitigation for permitting the Carlsbad desalination plant.

Vice Chairman Madaffer reported that SDCWA member Olivenhain Municipal Water District (OMWD) was recently honored by the California Water Environment Association for its 4S Ranch Water Reclamation Facility, named statewide small plant of the year for 2024. He noted that OMWD has received this award five times since 2019 and that about fifteen percent of its overall water demand is from recycled water. He also noted that this reduces demand on the Colorado River.

Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)

Member Nelson reported that CVWD is proceeding with its WRP 4 project, a recycling project, with Inflation Reduction Act Bucket 2 funds, noting that they would be able to use the alternative water supply and leave water in Lake Mead over the next two decades.

Member Nelson reported that CVWD has revised their water rates in response to a related judgment, noting that it will cause a minor change in operations.

Member Nelson reported that their mediation with Agua Calientes over groundwater and native safe yield is proceeding well, noting that CVWD anticipates cooperative resolution within this year. In response to a congratulatory comment by Chair Hamby, he noted that the disagreement has been going on for thirteen years.

General Matters

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Board staff are modifying the Board meeting format and asked for feedback from the Board.

Chairman Hamby noted that Reclamation needs to be able to move forward with the draft EIS and was asking for feedback from the Basin States by Memorial Day on components of the draft EIS. Chairman Hamby noted that the Basin States requested that the Basin Hybrid alternative included in Reclamation's January 2025 Alternatives Report be replaced with a new alternative based on natural flow. Chairman Hamby reported that a final Basin States deal would be needed by early 2026.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin was unhappy with the Alternatives Report, believing that it downplayed the risks faced by the Upper Basin in the absence of a seven-state deal. The failure of Reclamation to model Compact compliant releases from Lake Powell had pushed the basinwide shortfall onto the Lower Basin, inflating potential reductions. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin has been regularly

encouraging Reclamation to signal their willingness to unilaterally use federal authorities in the Upper Basin in the absence of a seven-state agreement.

Member Jones noted that the announcement of a nominee for Reclamation Commissioner could represent an opportunity to message to the media about the necessity for alternatives compliant with the Law of the River. Member Jones suggested holding media events to lay the groundwork for future media statements.

Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the Basin States were attempting to limit media posturing. Member Nelson noted that this creates a media vacuum that can then be filled by others, such as the recent NGO petition to regulate uses in the Lower Basin. Member Jones noted that California can still engage in public information campaigns without violating the Basin States truce. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that California is still providing information to the media regularly.

Executive Director Neuwerth noted that California had been holding regular one-on-one meetings with other Basin States to have candid discussion and share perspectives. These discussions helped inform a recent pivot in the Basin States approach, moving from a paradigm built around Basin-wide contributions to one centered on a flow-based release obligation from Lake Powell. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the idea has been pitched as a divorce, with the Basins free to operate as they saw fit to accommodate the required release. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the idea is premised upon the Upper Basin making a firm commitment to meet the required release. Chairman Hamby noted that if the deal goes forward, the Lower Basin would be willing to set Compact claims aside.

Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the Lower Basin needs to finalize a Lake Mead shortage curve that would operate in conjunction with the new flow-based Powell release. Executive Director Neuwerth also noted that California has initiated discussions about intra-state allocations of its agreed-upon reductions.

Member Jones noted that the President's Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 proposed cuts to Reclamation's budget and staffing, which could affect the availability of federal funding for conservation grants in the future. Executive Director Neuwerth agreed, stating that California should be thinking strategically about how to make requests for future funding. Chairman Hamby noted that Scott Cameron and others at Department of the Interior (DOI) have indicated that funding and staffing may be available if a deal materializes.

Member Madaffer suggested a media event highlighting the efficient use of water in the Lower Basin. Member Jones emphasized the importance of maintaining an ongoing conversation with the media.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was conducted.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chairman Hamby announced that the next Board meeting is scheduled to be at 10:00 a.m. on June 11, 2025, at Chino Hills, CA.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 11:11 a.m.