MINUTES OF MEETING
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Friday, January 9, 2026

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Friday, January 9, 2026, at Orion Room of Classic Club, 75200 Classic Club Blvd, Palm Desert, CA 92211.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

Gloria Cordero (MWD)
Thomas Gibson (DWR Designee)
John B. Hamby, Chairman (IID)
Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)
Delon Kwan (LADWP Alternate)
Jim Madaffer, Vice Chairman (SDCWA)
Peter Nelson (CVWD)
Brad Robinson (PVID Alternate)
Frank Ruiz (Public Member)
David Vigil (DFW Alternate Designee)

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)
Gina Dockstader (IID Alternate)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)
Dana Fisher, Jr (PVID)
Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)
Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)
David R. Pettijohn (LADWP)

Others Present:

Steve Abbott
Fernando Castro-Alvarez
Robert Cheng
Dennis Davis
JR Echard
Steve Grasha
Eric Katz
Laura Landin
Yuanyuan Myint
Jessica Neuwerth
John Powell
Shana Rapoport
Alexi Schnell
Tina Shields
Joseph Vanderhorst
Petya Vasileva
Chance Wilcox
Jerry Zimmerman

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

Chairman Hamby swore in Thomas Gibson, the new designee board member representing the California Department of Water Resources.

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.

Chance Wilcox, California Desert Program Manager of the National Parks Conservation Association, made a comment to the Board.

Member Nelson introduced Steve Grasha, Director of the Desert Water Agency.

Hearing no further comments, Chairman Hamby moved on to the next item on the agenda.

REPORTS

Water Supply and Operations Report

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that precipitation conditions over the last few months have been a mixed bag but overall, there has been poor snow accumulation. She stated that conditions in the Colorado River Basin in November and December were very dry, with wetter conditions in October. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that during the first few days of January the Colorado River Basin experienced wet conditions due to storm activity. She explained that Basin wide precipitation conditions are near or above normal, noting precipitation was 103% of normal in the Upper Basin and 150% of normal in the Lower Basin. However, the Upper and Lower Basin snowpack was below average due to above normal temperatures. She explained that the poor snowpack has impacted spring runoff into Lake Powell and runoff is projected to be 70% of average. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that it is still early in the winter season and overall precipitation and snowpack conditions could improve.

Colorado River Basin Programs Report

Staff Member Rapoport reported on highlights from a memo included in the meeting packet that provides a report on activities and updates pertaining to programs in the Colorado River Basin.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that in 2026 the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program is going to be focusing on a triennial review of water quality standards. Every three years, as required by the Clean Water Act, water quality standards need to be reviewed. The salinity standard for the Colorado River hasn't changed since it was put into place; however, it needs to be reviewed and will be accompanied by an implementation plan. That work will be coming through the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that one of the priorities in 2026 for the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program is to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior regarding potential experiments through Glen Canyon Dam. Staff Member Rapoport stated that the two potential experiments that are likely to be the hot topics for this year are Cool Mix Flows and a High Flow Experiment.

Staff Member Rapoport stated that Cool Mix Flow experiments were conducted last year and the year before and involve Reclamation releasing cooler water through the bypass tubes at Glen Canyon Dam to try and cool down the water to prevent high-risk invasive species, primarily smallmouth bass, from breeding below the dam in an effort to protect the humpback chub. Staff Member Rapoport added that Cool Mix Flows have been successful in the last couple of years but at great expense to hydropower. The 2026 experiment, because of the hydrological conditions, would be a costly experiment.

Staff Member Rapoport reported that the other experiment on the table is a High Flow Experiment to try and push sediment downstream. There was enough sediment to conduct an experiment in the fall; however, the Secretary of the Interior deferred a potential experiment to the spring due to the federal government shutdown.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Staff Member Rapoport reported that in 2026 the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program will be focused on making sure that compliance is in place for post-2026 guidelines. Staff Member Rapoport stated that the California permittees are working very closely with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife on the California permit, as well as with the federal agencies on the federal permit.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Board had been provided with a written memo summarizing recent Basin States activities. She stated that the states were unable to reach agreement by the federal government's November 11 deadline to submit a consensus proposal, and a deadline of February 14 had been set. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that further discussion would occur later in the meeting.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

Member Agency and Public Member Reports

Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

IID Water Department Manager Tina Shields reported on IID's efforts related to the potential listing of the western burrowing owl as protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) by the California Fish and Wildlife Commission (CFWC). She noted that such listing would complicate operations and maintenance (O&M) activities in the IID's water system. Ms. Shields reported that IID commissioned a survey of burrowing owls earlier in the year (2025), and that the survey found over 7,000 breeding pairs in the Imperial Valley and over 300 in the Coachella Valley, noting that these are significantly higher than in previous years. She reported that IID created a summary report of the survey findings and submitted it to the CFWC for consideration. She stated that they expect an initial response from CFWC staff in April. She anticipated that the CFWC would make a decision on listing later in the summer and expressed hope that if they do choose to list the western burrowing owl, they will exclude the Imperial and Coachella Valley populations. Ms. Shields concluded by noting that she would keep the Board posted in case additional comment letters to support the non-listing of the species are needed after the staff-level report is released.

Member Nelson asked whether the lack of owl counts in Coachella Valley prior to 2025 indicated zero owls or no data. Ms. Shields clarified that it meant no data, and that there is historical data in the Imperial Valley due to periodic studies and surveys connected to Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) environmental permitting. She further noted that IID already has had various mitigation measures in place, including both education and physical measures.

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD)

Member Cordero reported that MWD has increased its public outreach related to the Colorado River negotiations on social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

Member Cordero reported on additional funding that MWD has received to allow it to increase its commercial and public agency turf replacement program to a record $7 per square foot. She noted that this has increased the participation by commercial areas by tenfold. She further reported that homeowners' associations (HOAs) are also now able to participate, for which MWD has received some local interest. She noted that while this has increased turf replacement, MWD does not have the funds to cover all the increased interest. She stated that MWD does have funds to cover $4 per square foot with $96 million from Reclamation's Lower Colorado Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program and will be pursuing that for the increased demand.

Member Cordero reported that in December Governor Newsom certified that under Senate Bill 149, the Infrastructure Streamlining Program, the Pure Water project would receive expedited judicial review if the Environmental Impact Report faces any legal challenges. She reported that the MWD Board will consider its Final Impact Report for Pure Water in its February meeting, noting that after the Final Impact Report is complete MWD will consider whether to move forward with the next funding steps for the program.

San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)

Vicie Chairman Madaffer reported on SDCWA's Permanent Special Agricultural Water Rate Program. He noted that SDCWA's board recently renewed this program, which ensures that they give discounted water rates to farmers in support of the region's agricultural industry. Vice Chairman Madaffer summarized the agricultural industry in San Diego Country, noting that there are over 5,000 farmers that utilize about 250,000 acres and produce about $1.7 billion in commodities per year. He noted that the discounted rate program started in 2008, with its current form starting in 2020, and that it has been extended with the backing of the Farm Bureau in San Diego County. Vice Chairman Madaffer described the program generally, noting that it provides discounted water rates in exchange for an interruptible lower level of service during supply shortages. He stated that the discount is $800 per acre-foot.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Member Vigil reported on CDFW efforts to monitor, map and control the golden mussel, a recent invasive species in California, noting that it was first found a year ago in the San Joaquin Sacramento Delta area and that it is migrating with the flow in the California Aqueduct. He reported that CDFW now has an active map on their website to show where they have been detected in real-time. He discussed CDFW's experience with the quagga mussel, noting that it has been almost 20 years since it was introduced and that it has been relatively controlled through collaboration with water agencies and inspections and decontamination efforts. He reported that CDFW is now in the process of training trainers on inspection and decontamination of watercraft and will offer training a couple times per year. He also noted that CDFW is working with LADWP to do training

in the Eastern Sierra Nevada with local regional scientists there. He discussed the general state-wide strategy to control the golden mussel, including developing and updating control and response plans for water agencies. He concluded by noting that there will be more work in the upper part of the state compared to that of the quagga mussel in Southern California.

COMMISIONER'S REPORT

Chairman Hamby reported that Reclamation has set a February 14 deadline for Basin States agreement on Post-2026 operations. Chairman Hamby noted that the Lower Basin developed a proposal in 2024 that shared 1.5 MAF of near-annual reductions among the Lower Basin states and Mexico and would share additional reductions 50-50 between the Upper and Lower Basins. This proposal included several major compromises from long-standing Lower Basin positions, but conversations between the basins on the proposal stalled in 2024.

Chairman Hamby reported that in 2025, Basin dialogue was reinvigorated by discussion of a natural flow proposal, which would simplify required deal points and adapt to hydrology. If the river's natural flow were allocated 65% to the Lower Basin and 35% to the Upper Basin, both basins would have to adapt their uses to live within that volume, however much or little hydrology provided. However, several of the Upper Basin states rejected the proposal. The Basin states returned to a framework similar to the 2024 proposals and established workgroups in an attempt to make progress on key issues. However, major policy disagreement between the Basins remains, related primarily to Powell-to-Mead releases, the use of reservoirs above Lake Powell, and reductions above 1.5 MAF.

Chairman Hamby reported that the Lower Basin has provided numerous proposals, worked to maintain creativity and flexibility, and met with Upper Basin states individually and together to better understand their positions. However, the Upper Basin has been consistently unwilling to commit to reduce its use, and this position has halted progress toward Basin States agreement.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation is expected to release a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) today. The EIS alternatives were expected to be similar to those proposed by Reclamation in January 2025, with the exception of the Basin States Hybrid alternative. The Basin States Hybrid alternative was modified into a natural flow proposal, reflecting the status of Basin States discussions in summer of 2025.

In response to a question from Vice Chairman Madaffer, Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the EIS will likely show reductions of as much as 4 MAF to the Lower Basin under some alternatives. Member Nelson asked whether use of the Upper

Initial Units to bolster Lake Powell would be included in any of the EIS alternatives; Executive Director Neuwerth reported that it was included in two.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that although the Basin States had initially hoped to reach agreement for twenty years, recent discussions have focused on a five-year agreement, in hopes that a shorter term could narrow the points of disagreement. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that during a five-year agreement, the Upper Basin could commit to build conservation capacity, making it easier for them to make binding conservation commitments in a future agreement. Member Ruiz stated that a short-term deal may be the best option given the current landscape.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that in order for Reclamation to publish a final EIS with a preferred alternative no later than summer 2026, the Basin States would need to reach agreement by approximately February or March.

In response to a question from Vice Chairman Madaffer, Chairman Hamby reported that there has been limited discussion so far about the availability of federal funding to help materialize the provisions of a Basin States deal. Some funding is still available under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, which helped materialize over 3.7 MAF of Lower Basin conservation in recent years, but the remaining funding is likely not adequate.

Chairman Hamby reported on several upcoming meetings. The Basin States plan to meet the following week in an attempt to reach agreement on a five-year agreement. The seven Basin States governors and Basin States principals were invited to a meeting with Secretary of the Interior Burgum at the end of January. Finally, the California agencies and Colorado River Board staff met with California Natural Resource Agency and Governor's Office staff in Sacramento earlier in the week. Member Gibson reported that the meeting reflected the importance of the Colorado River negotiations to the state of California.

Vice Chairman Madaffer stated that he was encouraged that the agencies had met with Governor's Office staff and noted that it is important for California to tell its story on the conservation and stewardship occurring within the state. Member Cordero agreed, noting that access to water is critical for health and safety, agriculture, and the economy in Southern California. Member Kwan also emphasized the importance of telling California's story, noting that LADWP has made major investments in local water supply projects.

Member Nelson stated that California has significantly reduced its use of the Colorado River and can serve as an example of what is possible for other Basin States. Member Nelson shared appreciation for the proposals put forward by the Lower Basin states, which seek binding commitments to reduce water use from the Upper Basin.

Member Robinson urged caution in putting additional Lower Basin conservation on the table, noting the impacts that the Lower Basin's extensive conservation can have on agricultural districts.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Hamby moved a motion to enter Executive Session, seconded by Member Cordero. By roll-call vote, this item was unanimously approved.

The Board entered Executive Session at 11:38 a.m.

Pursuant to Section 12519 of Water Code, an Executive Session was held to discuss interstate claims to the use of Colorado River system waters in judicial proceedings, administrative proceedings, and/or negotiations with representatives from the other Basin states of federal government.

REGULAR SESSION

The Board resumed the regular session at 12:00 p.m. No action was taken during the Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

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