

MINUTES OF MEETING  
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA  
Wednesday, February 18, 2026

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California (CRB or Board) was held on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at Sycamore Room of DoubleTree by Hilton Claremont, 555 West Foothill Blvd, Claremont, CA 91711.

Board Members and Alternates Present:

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

Board Members and Alternates Absent:

Michael Camacho (MWD Alternate)	Christopher Hayes (DFW Designee)
Castulo Estrada (CVWD Alternate)	Jordan Joaquin (Public Member)
Eric Heidemann (SDCWA Alternate)	Frank Ruiz (Public Member)

Others Present:

Steve Abbott	Travis Moore
Fernando Castro-Alvarez	Yuanyuan Myint
Dennis Davis	Jessica Neuwerth
JR Echard	Jason Rollo
Steve Grasha	Shanti Rosset
Christopher Harris	Alexi Schnell
Eric Katz	Joseph Vanderhorst
Laura Landin	Jerry Zimmerman
Dwight Lomayesva	

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Hamby announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:10 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 reported that Upper Basin precipitation is currently 84% of normal with snowpack at just 58% of normal. She reported that the Basin has experienced an unusually warm winter to date, adding that the Colorado River snowpack, as well as within California is very low. She added that the Water Year 2026 (WY-2026) projected runoff to Lake Powell is 52% of average, which is drier than the previous year and approaching the lowest projected runoff in the last 25 years. She stated that there is a disparity between Basin precipitation and snowpack, and this disparity has impacted the runoff models as they are calibrated with snowpack data. She stated that over the last few months, runoff projections have steadily decreased as the Basin continues to receive below average snowpack.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) February 24-month study Most Probable projection shows Lake Powell dropping below 3,500 feet before September of WY-2026. She explained that 3,500 feet is the protection elevation that Reclamation has chosen as a buffer to 3,490 feet, the minimum power pool for Lake Powell. She stated that below 3,490 feet there is a loss of power production at Glen Canyon dam. She stated that water can still be released but it would be routed through the outlet works and not through the power plant, adding that the outlets work are used regularly for experiments and not meant for supply release of 7 MAF of water over a year. She added that Reclamation is concerned about safely releasing water through the outlet works.

Executive Director Neuwerth added that the February 24-month study does include the impacts of the storm system the Basin experienced last week and does not include response actions such as releases from Upper Basin reservoirs. She stated these reservoirs include Flaming Gorge, Blue Mesa, and Navajo and that releases may start in May to protect Lake Powell's elevation of 3,500 feet. In addition, Reclamation is also working on making an adjustment to releases from Lake Powell to Lake Mead, called a

6E adjustment. She explained that under the 2024 Supplemental EIS to the 2007 Guidelines, Reclamation can reduce the Lake Powell release to as low as 6 MAF in any year to protect elevation 3,500 feet. She stated that the current planned release in WY-2026 is 7.48 MAF, and Reclamation's action would reduce the release by as much as 1.48 MAF to protect elevation 3,500 feet. . Reclamation will provide clarity on the reduced releases over the next few weeks. She reported that the February 24-Month study shows Lake Mead's elevation is around 1,060 feet and is projected to end the year at 1,050 feet. However, if releases are curtailed, Lake Mead's elevation could drop to 1,040 feet or 1,030 feet.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that California precipitation conditions to date are 110% of average, but snowpack is only 54% of average, a disparity that the Colorado River Basin is also experiencing. She stated that higher than normal temperatures are the main factor, stating that it has been exceptionally warm throughout the fall and into the early winter months, impacting snowpack accumulation. She stated that overall precipitation volume is not as dire as snowpack, but precipitation is not translating into runoff. She added that there are few good months of snow accumulation ahead, so we are waiting to see if conditions improve.

Member Fisher asked if there was a possibility that the power pool may not be maintained despite additional releases from the Upper reservoirs. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that 24-Month minimum probable projection shows Lake Powell dropping to 3,450 feet. She added that it is possible that the "hole" in Lake Powell might not be filled with the combination of releases from the Upper Initial Units (UIU) and reducing downstream releases this year.

Member Fisher asked whether the Basin States have come together to demand that Reclamation fix the issues with Glen Canyon Dam. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that the Upper Basin does not want their UIU storage to be depleted for the sake of Lake Powell and similarly, the Lower Basin does not want Lake Mead depleted. She reported that both Basins believe that Reclamation needs to resolve the issues with Glen Canyon Dam. She stated that Glen Canyon Dam requires significant funding and infrastructure changes to allow it to operate below the minimum power pool.

Chairman Hamby stated that the Lower Basin has consistently advocated for Reclamation to make the necessary fixes to Glen Canyon Dam. He added that Scott Cameron, Reclamation's Acting Commissioner, is aware of the concerns and has stated that fixes to Glen Canyon Dam would be expensive. He added that the Upper Basin Reclamation staff have released new technical information that determined that using the low elevation outlet works may not be as harmful to the dam as originally thought. In addition, Chairman Hamby stated that the amount of water below deadpool in Lake Powell's exceeds storage in California's largest reservoir, Lake Shasta.

## Colorado River Basin Programs Report

Executive Director Neuwerth 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***

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum's (Forum) Work Group is meeting right now in Orange County and that the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council (Advisory Council) held a meeting last month.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the only update from that meeting is that the members of the Advisory Council are continuing to push Reclamation on a solution in the Paradox Valley. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that the Paradox Valley is a point source for a lot of salinity and there is an aging deep-injection well there that is collecting saline runoff prior to it intersecting the Dolores River. Executive Director Neuwerth added that the well has been showing signs of decline for about a decade. Reclamation produced an Environmental Impact Statement five or six years ago and selected the "No Action Alternative" as no optimal alternatives were identified. Pressure has been growing from the Advisory Council and the Forum, asking Reclamation to continue exploring options that could control salinity in the area. The Forum and the States are also considering exploring options. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that during the meeting the Advisory Council heard from Wayne Pullan, the Upper Colorado lead for Reclamation, that they are moving forward with a list of different options and starting to gather more information to help identify potential solutions.

### ***Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program***

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program held its Annual Reporting Meeting and pointed to a write-up in the Program's Memo with the highlights from the meeting. The humpback chub, which is the main species of concern in the Grand Canyon reach, seems to be doing pretty well. The numbers are going up because the water temperature has been high because the reservoir is low.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that there is a link in the memo to a video that the Navajo Nation put together called "River as Teacher."

### ***Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program***

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) is continuing to meet regularly, including today.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that the LCR MSCP permittees are preparing to modify that program to match what is needed post-2026.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that the LCR MSCP provides what is referred to as change in flow coverage. In the Lower Basin, if water is transferred or left behind in Lake Mead, those are actions that need Endangered Species Act (ESA) and California Endangered Species Act (CESA) coverage. The LCR MSCP covers those actions. If larger changes in flow actions are contemplated in the future, there might need to be changes to the LCR MSCP to cover those actions. This would be a multi-year process. The LCR MSCP includes interim coverage for up to 3 million acre-feet of change in flow through 2028, providing a bit of a longer for this process than is available for the post-2026 guidelines in general.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation is working on an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for post-2028 changes to the LCR MSCP, with an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) being managed by three California co-lead agencies. Executive Director Neuwerth stated that scoping on the EIS/EIR has not yet started because the Post-2026 Guidelines, which will inform you about future changes in flow, remain so unresolved.

#### Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that Reclamation had released its draft EIS for Post-2026 operations in January. The EIS alternatives were generally 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. Executive Director Neuwerth noted that the updated Basin States Hybrid is generally acceptable to the Lower Basin but has been rejected by the Upper Basin. Several Board members commented on the natural flow proposal. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that many of the other alternatives have drastic negative outcomes in the Lower Basin. Comments are due on the EIS by March 2, and the Board is working to finalize a comment letter.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Basin States missed a February 14 deadline for a consensus agreement, the second missed deadline in the past three months. Reclamation has not yet shared their next steps or whether there are any expected consequences for the failure to meet the deadline.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported legislation creating an interest-bearing account for non-federal contributions to the LCR MSCP passed the Senate last month. In addition, Senator Padilla has introduced two new bills meant to explore innovative programs for on-farm activities and water conservation. In response to a question from Member Nelson, she noted that the scope and associated funding for the bills were

relatively small scale. Some funding for Lower Basin conservation is still available through the Inflation Reduction Act, although it would need to be obligated before the end of September.

Member Madaffer asked whether it would be possible to extend the 2007 Guidelines for five years. Executive Director Neuwerth reported that there would be both challenges and benefits to extending the guidelines, but that extending the current framework would require some careful construction and would likely be opposed by the Upper Basin.

Member Fisher noted that there is a need for augmentation across the Basin, which could help ensure sufficient storage to meet water needs and generate hydropower, and the political climate may be friendlier to pipeline or desalination projects than in the past.

## **DISCUSSION/ACTION**

### **Consideration and Approval of Meeting Minutes of the October 15, 2025 Board Meeting**

Chairman Hamby asked for a motion to approve the October 15, 2025 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 the December 16, 2025 Board Meeting**

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

### **Member Agency and Public Member Reports**

#### ***Imperial Irrigation District (IID)***

Member Gina Dockstader reported that IID has a new water master, Elise Rojas. Ms. Dockstader noted that the water master manages IID's annual diversion of Colorado River water of 2.6 million acre-feet and releases from Brock Reservoir and operates IID's main canals and regulating and interceptor reservoirs. She further elaborated on the roles and responsibilities of the water master position, noting in particular how skilled they are in anticipating farmers' actual daily water needs based on a variety of factors such as weather and holidays.

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

Member Cordero reported on MWD's Pure Water Southern California (Pure Water) facility, noting that last week the MWD Board voted unanimously to certify the Final Environmental Impact Review (EIR) report for the program, thereby completing the legally required review. She reported that this certification clears the way for future implementation decisions, including phasing, funding, design and construction. She stated that this project is part of MWD's Climate Adaptation Management Plan and a larger discussion on the biennial budget, which, she noted, started at the same meeting last week. She reported that the proposed budget will include the funding, design, permitting and other pre-construction activities for stage one level of 45 million gallons per day. She further noted that a series of budget hearings began last week, and that the budget will be reviewed and adopted during MWD's Board meeting in April.

Member Cordero also reported on the broad support that MWD has received for Pure Water from the water sector and the community, noting the support from Los Angeles County Sanitation, Central Arizona Project, and Southern Nevada Water Authority in the weeks leading up to the approval of the EIR. She concluded by noting that there are still important decisions to be made about Pure Water and that CRB input and engagement is welcome.

### ***San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)***

Member Madaffer reported that SDCWA just adopted its 2026 Long-Range Financing Plan, noting that it is a ten-year demand forecast that guides SDCWA's capital improvement projects and other SDCWA activities. He reported on the challenge of over-conserving water users, which he noted reduces water sales and makes debt management more difficult. He noted that the new plan includes items that will help SDCWA adjust.

Member Madaffer reported that SDCWA unanimously elected Teresa Acosta as its Board Secretary, noting that she is a Council Member for the City of Carlsbad and that starting in September of this year she will be President of the League of California Cities. He expressed admiration for her and anticipated that she may eventually become SDCWA Board Chair.

### **COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Chairman Hamby provided an overview of current Basin States negotiations and the issues preventing consensus. He stated that the Upper Basin States have an obligation to provide 75 MAF over every ten-year period, plus half of the treaty delivery to Mexico. With projected releases of 6 MAF from Lake Powell in 2026, Lee Ferry flows are projected to fall below the volume require by the Compact. Although the Lower Basin has

been willing to offer more flexible options to the Upper Basin in negotiations, this flexibility is contingent upon meaningful, binding commitments from the Upper Basin to use less water.

Chairman Hamby reported that, on average, the Upper Basin uses about the same amount of water as California, with an average of about 4.3 MAF, swinging to as low as 3.5 MAF or as high as 4.7 MAF. However, in general, their water use is slowly increasing and rarely drops below 3.9 MAF even in dry years. Chairman Hamby noted that Lake Powell and the Upper Initial Units (UIUs) above it were created to allow the Upper Basin to use stored water to meet their obligation in dry years, rather than curtailing uses. If water is not being released from those facilities when needed to maintain Compact compliance, additional shortages are being forced on the Lower Basin.

Chairman Hamby stated that the Secretary of the Interior Burgum had invited the seven Basin States governors to a meeting on January 30. He reported that the meeting was generally positive in tone. Chairman Hamby noted that the Basin States missed a February 14 deadline for agreement, and next steps remain unclear. He reported that the Basin States were discussing a short-term deal, but without Upper Basin commitments and actions, no Compact waiver could be offered. Given the Upper Basin's position, a deal between the Lower Basin and federal government may be the best achievable option.

Executive Director Neuwerth reported that the Lower Basin had started discussing options for a two-year proposal, given that both twenty-year and five-year proposals have failed due to disagreement between the basins. She reported that the Upper Basin has been very consistent and that they will not offer more than voluntary conservation. In response to a question from Member Fisher, Executive Director Neuwerth reported that, although the federal team clearly prefers a long-term agreement, they may be willing to accept a two- to three-year agreement out of necessity.

Member Fisher stated that Reclamation is protecting Lake Powell at the expense of Lake Mead, and the spirit of collaboration and shared sacrifice seen in the 2007 Guidelines is no longer in place. Member Fisher noted that the incentives and disincentives currently in place are not motivating the Upper Basin to compromise. Chairman Hamby noted that Utah's legislature has been spending money to conserve water, and there are conservation activities in Wyoming and New Mexico, but not every state is participating. He reported that Reclamation has authority in the Upper Basin, specifically through the operation of the Upper Initial Units of the Colorado River Storage Project.

Executive Director Neuwerth stated that access to banked conservation remains a priority for California, as the state which has created the most Intentionally Created

Surplus. She reported that modifying existing rules for creation, storage, and recovery are under discussion as part of a short-term deal.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Hamby adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.