

- Colorado River Management Report

## Summary

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This Report provides a summary of the activities related to the Colorado River during September.

## Detailed Report

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### **Draft Agreement Completed to Fund Pilot Operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant**

The Bureau of Reclamation has completed drafting an agreement to fund pilot operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant should Reclamation decide to move forward with pilot operation in 2009 and 2010 as proposed. Metropolitan, Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), and Central Arizona Water Conservation District (CAWCD) staff have reviewed the agreement and provided joint comments on October 3 to Reclamation for consideration. To help gather information to determine the scope of issues associated with its proposed action, Reclamation will host an open house on October 8 in Yuma. Members of the public, organizations, and agencies that have an interest in the pilot operation are invited to attend the meeting and provide comments. Reclamation staff will provide information on the Environmental Assessment schedule and objectives, and will be available to accept comments.

Reclamation is proposing the pilot operation to:

- obtain data that can only be adequately evaluated under actual longer-term operating conditions;
- identify and initiate technology improvements in the existing Plant desalination process to meet current technology standards;
- refine and validate current cost estimates for operation, maintenance, and management of the Plant; and
- acquire updated process-related effluent and emissions data over an extended period of time for analysis of potential environmental consequences associated with operation of the Plant as intended by Title I of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act.

Metropolitan, SNWA, and CAWCD staff are proposing monitoring the water quality, water quantity and biological resources within the Ciénega de Santa Clara before, during and after the pilot operation to document potential changes in the Ciénega associated with Plant operation. The Ciénega provides habitat for a variety of bird species, including the Yuma clapper rail, a U.S. endangered species, and is a stopover for birds that migrate along the Pacific Flyway. Pumped drainage water from the Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District is currently transported to the Ciénega.

A 14-month survey of water quality in the Ciénega was conducted by the University of Arizona from August 2006 to September 2007. The survey was conducted to evaluate the effect of the 10 percent capacity, three-month demonstration operation of the Plant from March 2007 to May 2007. The demonstration operation did not significantly affect water quality in the Ciénega. Because there was no significant response in water quality to the 10 percent capacity demonstration operation, the University could not predict changes in water quality that would result from longer duration or higher percentage capacity operation of the Plant.

CAWCD has continued its contract with the University to conduct water quality and vegetation monitoring in the Ciénega, with work having commenced in July 2008. It is proposed that Metropolitan provide approximately \$94,000 to fund 25 percent of the costs of the Environmental Monitoring Plan in fiscal year 2008-09 through execution of an agreement with CAWCD and SNWA.

## **Drop 2 Reservoir Project Groundbreaking Scheduled for October 21**

The Department of the Interior has scheduled the groundbreaking for the Drop 2 Reservoir Project for October 21. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne plans to participate in the event. A notice to proceed was issued on September 22 by the Bureau of Reclamation to the joint venture of Ames Construction, Inc. and Coffman Specialties, Inc. Clearing of the reservoir site has been completed.

## **Palo Verde Irrigation District/Metropolitan Forbearance and Fallowing Program Payments Processed**

From its inception in January 2005 through 2007, the Palo Verde Irrigation District/Metropolitan Forbearance and Fallowing Program has saved an estimated 286,000 acre-feet of water, or an average of 95,300 acre-feet per year. Beginning in August of this year and continuing through July 2010, the fallowed acreage has been increased from 14,600 acres to almost 26,000 acres, the maximum contemplated under the program. Water savings are estimated to total about 82,000 acre-feet this calendar year and 118,000 acre-feet next calendar year. The annual payments made by Metropolitan to participating landowners in September of this year totaled \$14.8 million. Discussions continued with PVID regarding the possibility of augmenting the existing program on a short-term basis. Depending on willing landowners' level of participation, up to an additional 60,000 acre-feet of water could be saved in a year. Additional fallowing could commence next August should the parties wish to proceed.

## **Memorial Service Scheduled on October 10 for United States Commissioner Carlos Marin**

A memorial service for Commissioner Carlos Marin of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) will be held at the Chamizal National Memorial, 800 S. San Marcial Street, El Paso, Texas on October 10, 2008 at 2 p.m. Commissioner Marin and Commissioner Arturo Herrera of the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, along with the pilot and another passenger perished in a plane crash in the Sierra Madre mountain range in Mexico while on their official duties. The Commissioners were traveling to the area to assess Rio Grande flood conditions at Presidio, Texas-Ojinaga, Chihuahua and to coordinate joint response efforts with local officials and the Mexican government.

Commissioner Marin was appointed to his position by President George W. Bush in December 2006 after 27 years of service to the Commission. As U.S. Commissioner, he oversaw employees and projects in 12 offices along the U.S.-Mexico border. Arturo Herrera had served as Mexican Commissioner since 1989. Most recently, they concluded a binding agreement, Minute No. 313, for improvements to the Rio Grande flood control project in the El Paso-Juarez Valley. Commissioner Marin and Commissioner Herrera devoted their lives to a common goal of furthering cooperation between the United States and Mexico on transboundary issues. It is a measure of both Commissioners' dedication and service that they were working together to develop a bi-national solution to Rio Grande flood conditions when their lives were tragically cut short.