

• Colorado River Management Report

Summary

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

Detailed Report

Secretary of the Interior Commemorates Beginning of Drop 2 Reservoir Construction

On October 21, the Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne kicked off the construction activities for the Drop 2 Reservoir Project, which when completed will conserve water that cannot otherwise be captured during times of high flows on the Lower Colorado River. During his remarks, the Secretary complimented the cooperative efforts of the three agencies that funded the project: Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), Central Arizona Water Conservation District (CAP), and Metropolitan. Other speakers at the event included the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, Bob Johnson, and a representative of each of the funding agencies. Once completed, the reservoir will save an average of 70,000 acre-feet of water each year.

The Drop 2 project represents the first multi-state funded water conservation project that followed the adoption of the new operating guidelines for the Colorado River executed last December. Those guidelines provided that agencies that fund water conservation projects would receive storage credits in Lake Mead. For the Drop 2 Reservoir, in exchange for project funding, SNWA, CAP, and Metropolitan received a total of 600,000 acre-feet of storage credits, of which 100,000 acre-feet belong to Metropolitan. While construction of the Drop 2 reservoir is not scheduled to be completed until 2010, Metropolitan is already recovering its storage credits to help alleviate supply shortage conditions in California.

Southern Nevada Provides Additional 30,000 Acre-feet to Metropolitan

During October, Metropolitan reached agreement with Southern Nevada Water Authority to divert an additional 30,000 acre-feet of water that had been allocated to Nevada, increasing the total exchange amount for 2008 to 45,000 acre-feet. SNWA was able to increase its delivery of water to Metropolitan because it began implemented a land fallowing program on the Virgin and Muddy Rivers, which are tributary to the Colorado River. Currently, SNWA does not need the additional supply, and agreement was reached to deliver the water to Metropolitan through an existing exchange agreement between the two agencies. Eventually, Metropolitan will return the water to SNWA – most likely after the year 2020, when SNWA projects it will need the water back. In the meantime, the water will help supplement Diamond Valley Lake storage during near-term water cutbacks on the State Water Project.

Reclamation Seeks Input on Environment Assessment for Yuma Desalting Plant Pilot Operation

During October, Reclamation hosted a public meeting to provide information regarding the proposed pilot operation of the Yuma Desalting Project, and obtain plan input on the development of an environmental assessment for the one-year pilot operation. During the public comment period, representatives from environmental groups expressed concern about the impacts of the proposal on wetland areas across the border in Mexico, and insisted that a full Environmental Impacts Statement be prepared before moving ahead with the pilot operation. Reclamation has yet to respond to those comments.

Apart from Reclamation, the three potential funding agencies (SNWA, CAP, and Metropolitan) have agreed to fund a program to monitor the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico during the pilot operations. The monitoring information would be used in any comprehensive water management program that might be developed between Mexico and the United States.

Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

Water Exchange Discussions Continue with Arizona

During October, representatives from CAP, Arizona Department of Water Resources, and Metropolitan engaged in further discussions regarding an exchange proposal between CAP and Metropolitan. Based on initial forecasts of member agency water orders, CAP officials expect to have very little, if any, CAP water to exchange with Metropolitan in 2009. However, the agencies are exploring a proposal to move water that Nevada has stored in Arizona to Metropolitan. This option would move storage credits developed by SNWA to Metropolitan through the existing exchange agreement between SNWA and Metropolitan. Representatives from SNWA have expressed an interest in exploring that option, which could result in an additional 50,000 to 75,000 acre-feet of SNWA water provided to Metropolitan during 2009 (in addition to up to 40,000 acre-feet of SNWA's basic apportionment supplies).