



- Colorado River Management Report

## Summary

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

## Detailed Report

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### **Reclamation confers with Mexico regarding Yuma Desalting Plant Pilot Operation**

In early April, officials from the Bureau of Reclamation (and some water agency staff) met with Mexican officials in an effort to develop a mutually acceptable proposal for operating the Yuma Desalting Plant during 2010. Mexico had expressed interest in providing some additional water during the proposed pilot operation to the Santa Clara wetlands in Mexico, which receive agricultural return flow bypassing the Yuma Desalting Plant. The United States offered to fund a monitoring program of the Santa Clara wetlands during the pilot operation and explore delivering water that cannot be stored in the United States to the wetlands. Both parties are evaluating their position and will meet again to try and reach a consensus position. The United States has informed Mexico that it plans on moving forward with the Yuma Desalting Plant pilot operation in early 2010. If the pilot operation goes forward, the plant would begin a one-year operation and conserve about 30,000 acre-feet of water.

In order for the Yuma Desalting Plant begin pilot operation in early 2010, Reclamation would need to start receiving funds from the funding agency in early July. As such, the funding agreement is scheduled to be considered by the Board during its June meeting.

### **Palo Verde Irrigation District farmers begin signing up for one-year Fallowing Program**

Following Board approval of the one-year Palo Verde Irrigation District Emergency Fallowing Program in March, PVID farmers have begun enrolling in the program. Under the agreement, a farmer can begin fallowing land anytime between April 15 and August 1, and the land must remain fallowed for one year. Metropolitan has notified its lessees that fallowing of Metropolitan land will be increased to 50 percent beginning sometime this summer. The one-year fallowing program will increase the total fraction of the Palo Verde Valley that is fallowed from 29 percent to 44 percent and provide Metropolitan about an additional 65,000 acre-feet during that year (half in 2009 and half in 2010) under full participation.

### **Basin States to meet with Mexico to explore Bi-national Water Management Programs**

Earlier this year, the Basin States developed a bi-national water management discussion document that included water management programs that could benefit both countries. The document was provided to Mexico in January. After reviewing the document, Mexico requested a consultation meeting with federal representatives from the International Boundary and Water Commission and Reclamation and representatives from the Basin States to better understand the proposal. The Basin States have prepared a presentation to more fully explain the concepts contained in the Discussion Document and will provide that information to Mexico. In addition to explaining the concepts in more detail, the Basin States identified the policy and legal issues that need to be addressed in the bi-national discussions. It is anticipated that the Basin states will be prepared to meet with their counterparts from Mexico in May.

### **Reclamation developing inadvertent overrun and payback policy procedures**

In 2003, Reclamation adopted a policy that governed how and when inadvertent overruns of Colorado River would be paid back to the system. The policy was a first step and somewhat vague, and stated that more detailed procedures needed to be developed to effectively implement the policy. Reclamation is now moving forward and developing those procedures, in consultation with the Lower Basin representatives. While all agencies agree on the general payback principals, there are differing opinions on the details. Metropolitan is especially concerned with how the higher priorities within California make their respective paybacks, to ensure no impact to Metropolitan's Colorado River supplies. Metropolitan staff has been in discussions with both Imperial Irrigation

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District and Coachella Valley Water District on such procedures, and a separate agreement among the California agencies may be developed to govern paybacks within the state. Details on the discussions will be provided in future reports as they develop. The goal is to complete the procedures by the end of 2009.