THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Report

Office of the General Manager

• Colorado River Management Report

Summary

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

Detailed Report

Reclamation and Basin States Begin Colorado River Sustainability Study

In October, Reclamation and the Colorado River Basin States met to develop a plan to study the options to meet the long-term supply needs within the Colorado River Basin. The proposal outlining the $2 million study, which was selected from several proposals submitted to Reclamation, will be funded equally by Reclamation and the seven Colorado River Basin states. Metropolitan's funding share will be provided through payments made to the Six Agency Committee, which have been included in the Committee's fiscal year 2009/2010 budget. The scope of work for the study is being developed jointly by Reclamation and the Basin States over the next few months, with the two-year study beginning in early 2010.

The study will take into consideration anticipated climate change impacts to the Colorado River and population growth and determine the ability of the River to meet current and future water demands. It will also consider the potential for increased environmental water requirements within the Basin. It will then evaluate options for meeting those demands, including: increased conservation opportunities, changes to existing operational guidelines, and the addition of new facilities. The study will evaluate and recommend options to meet future water needs so that both Reclamation and individual water agencies may decide which, if any, opportunities to pursue.

Colorado River Aqueduct to Maximize Pumping for Remainder of 2009

After a nearly three-week maintenance shutdown of the Colorado River Aqueduct, water deliveries from the Colorado River are scheduled to be at full capacity for the remainder of 2009. Under the current plan the total pumping of Colorado River water for the year would exceed 1.1 million acre-feet, which is 88 percent of what is normally considered of the amount the Aqueduct can deliver in a year, and double the amount of Metropolitan's basic apportionment of Colorado River water (550,000 acre-feet). Included in the 1.1 maf figure is about 133,000 acre-feet of water to be exchanged with San Diego County Water Authority. In getting to the 1.1 maf delivery this year, water was obtained from transfer and exchange programs with: Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Water District, Palo Verde Irrigation District, Arizona Water Banking Authority, and Southern Nevada Water Authority. Additionally, it is anticipated that Metropolitan will store about 100,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead, which can be delivered during 2010.

Lake Mead Falls to Lowest Level in 45 Years

Despite two years of above normal snowfall in the Colorado Basin, Lake Mead has dropped to its lowest level since 1964, and as of the end of October stands at 42 percent of capacity. Over the last two years, the Upper Basin Reservoirs have captured most of the runoff and have increased significantly, with Lake Powell now 63 percent full. Where Lake Mead goes from here depends on how much snow falls on the Rocky Mountains this winter. If the runoff is average or above, Lake Powell will release the additional water and Lake Mead storage could increase by several million acre-feet. If the runoff is below average, however, Lake Mead will continue to drop. If the decline continues at its current rate, the first-ever shortage on the Colorado River could be declared by 2012. A shortage would affect Metropolitan by restricting its ability to recover some of its water stored in Lake Mead. In October, the National Weather Service forecast a 45 percent chance that runoff would be low enough to cause Lake Mead to drop this year. It is early in the water year, and as such, difficult to make credible predictions about how this year will end up; staff will monitor the water supply as the year unfolds.

Date of Report: October 29, 2009

Reclamation, Basin States Present Water Management Proposal to Mexico

In mid-October, representatives from Reclamation and the Colorado River Basin states met with representatives from Mexico to discuss the United States' counter proposal for bi-national water management. The counter proposal included the level of shortages Mexico would receive during droughts, how Mexico could store water in United States' reservoirs, and how U.S.-funded projects in Mexico would be managed by both countries. In general, the response from Mexico was positive, although the criteria for shortages in Mexico will require further discussion. Mexican representatives conveyed that Mexico is very interested and committed to the process, but an agreement will likely be needed in the next two years, under the current administration within Mexico. A bi-national technical group has been formed to model the proposal to see how it would affect water users in both countries and determine if it needs to be modified. The technical group will present its findings to the U.S. and Mexico in late January.

Salinity Control Projects Expand in Utah and Colorado

The Colorado River Salinity Control Forum met in Phoenix on October 28 and agreed to add two new areas, one near the Green River in Utah and one in Southern Colorado, to be included for new salinity control projects. The role of the Forum is to authorize funding for projects that can reduce the salinity of the Colorado River. The most effective method to reduce salinity is to convert flood irrigation systems to sprinkler systems, and reduced the amount of water leached through the soils, which picks up salt on its water to the Colorado River. It is estimated that Colorado River salinity has been reduced by 75 ppm at Lake Havasu due to the efforts of the Salinity Control Program.