



## ● **Colorado River Management Report**

### **Summary**

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This Report provides a summary of the activities related to the Colorado River during February 2010

### **Detailed Report**

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#### **California Developing Policy to Provide Water for Solar Development**

Staff from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), California's Colorado River Board, and Metropolitan have been working to develop a framework to allow future solar energy development access to new water supplies along the Lower Colorado River. The goal of the agencies is to provide long-term assurances of water supply for future solar development while protecting existing water users along the lower Colorado River. Several proposed solar energy projects would need to begin construction by the end of this year in order to qualify for federal funding opportunities.

Solar energy projects as far as 30 miles away from the Colorado River could be considered as recipients of Colorado River water in the future, so the need to develop a comprehensive policy is not limited to projects immediately adjacent to the River. The proposal being developed outlines provisions whereby solar energy companies could enter into a contract for Colorado River water from the federal government provided that they fund the development of an alternative water supply that could offset their use of Colorado River water. Because any new diversion of Colorado River water could affect Metropolitan's water supply, the alternative water developed would need to be available to Metropolitan – either by increasing the Colorado River supply available to Metropolitan or through an exchange of water from the State Water Project or local supplies. Board authorization would be required before any water exchange for solar development would be implemented.

#### **Rosarito Desalination Feasibility Study Nears Completion**

Phase I of a study to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a desalination plant in Rosarito Beach, Mexico with a delivery pipeline to both the Northern Mexico region and San Diego County is nearly complete, and the study appears to be concluding that a 50 million gallons per day desalination plant is feasible and merits further analysis. In 2009, Southern Nevada Water Authority, Central Arizona Project, San Diego County Water Authority, and Metropolitan agreed to jointly fund the study to evaluate how a desalination plant at Rosarito Beach could meet each agency's future water needs, along with the water needs of Northern Baja California. Under the proposal being analyzed, water would be provided to the County Water Authority by direct delivery, while supplies to the remaining participants would be made available through an exchange of Colorado River water with Mexico. The project participants will be meeting in the near future to determine which agencies wish to proceed with the next phase of the study.

#### **Preparation Work Continues on Yuma Desalting Plant**

Preparation continues to begin the pilot operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant (YDP) at one-third capacity. On February 8, Reclamation received a plant discharge permit from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, which will allow desalinated water from the YDP to be discharged into the Colorado River. Reclamation has received about half of the 2,300 reverse osmosis membranes that will be required to operate the plant. All supplemental contract employees needed to operate the YDP for the year have been hired. The current schedule is to begin operation of the YDP on May 3, 2010. A dedication ceremony is being planned for April 28, 2010.

Per an agreement with Mexico, the United States agreed to deliver 10,000 acre-feet of non-storable Colorado River water to the Santa Clara wetlands in Mexico either before or during the pilot operation of the YDP. Heavy rainfall along the Lower Colorado River in late January and early February allowed Reclamation to deliver a

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significant portion of the commitment – a total of 8,600 acre-feet. Reclamation will attempt to deliver the remaining portion during subsequent rainfall events.

### **Department of Interior Hosts WaterSMART Workshop**

On February 23 and 24, the Department of Interior hosted a workshop to kick-off the Department of Interior's WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) program. Staff from Metropolitan and several member agencies attended the workshop, which highlighted the water needs within the Colorado River Basin and discussed federal tools available to provide assistance in meeting those needs. The Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Anne Castle, highlighted the goals of Interior's WaterSMART program, which are to secure and stretch water supplies for existing use and future generations to benefit people, business, and the environment. Federal cost sharing opportunities are available through WaterSMART grants (formerly challenge grants) for implementing new smaller-scale water programs, continuation of Title XVI funding for water recycling projects, and the Basin Studies program to analyze impacts of climate change and support adaptation strategies. In the past year, Metropolitan and the Colorado Basin States received federal funding under the Basin Studies program to evaluate augmentation needs of the Colorado River, and several Metropolitan member agencies have taken advantage of Title XVI funding.