



● Colorado River Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of the activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources during October 2010.

Detailed Report

Reclamation Deems IID's Proposal Inappropriate

In response to Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) letter stating that it intends to deliver unused water directly to the Salton Sea this year, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) sent a letter to IID on October 14 stating that the action is inappropriate and not consistent with the Colorado River Water Delivery Agreement. Reclamation stopped short of prohibiting IID from delivering water to the Salton Sea, but did offer to facilitate a meeting to see if a solution could be developed that all parties could support. As of November 1, 2010, Reclamation has not set up such a meeting, but has indicated that it plans to do so in the near future. It is unclear at this time how much, if any, water IID has delivered to the Salton Sea under their proposed action.

On October 25, following Reclamation's letter, the San Diego County Water Authority sent a letter to Reclamation stating its view that Metropolitan contractually agreed not to challenge IID's use of water for mitigation purposes in the Quantification Settlement Agreement and related agreements. The letter also supports IID's position that it has a right to use its water for both storage and mitigation purposes, and concludes with support for a multi-agency meeting. If IID were successful in delivering its otherwise unused water to the Salton Sea in lieu of paying farmers to fallow land, the parties responsible for paying the mitigation costs would benefit. These parties are IID, Coachella Valley Water District, and the San Diego County Water Authority.

New Study Shows Increased Risk of Shortages

In October, as Lake Mead reached its lowest level since its initial fill, Reclamation completed updated modeling results to estimate the near-term shortage risks to the Colorado River Basin. Due to continued drought conditions and increased demand projections by the Upper Basin states, Reclamation now estimates that by the year 2024, one out of every two years the Lower Basin will be in some level of shortage. This new study highlights the need for the states to work together on the Basin Study to develop new tools to address the long-term supply and demand imbalance on the Colorado River. Because California is higher in priority than Nevada and Arizona, Metropolitan is more protected during shortages. But if shortages persist for long periods of time, it is clear all states will need to work together.

The amount of snowfall in the Colorado River Basin this winter will have impacts for many years. If the snowfall is below average, Lake Mead will fall and could trigger shortages by 2012 or 2013. However, if the snowfall is above average, significant additional releases would be made from Lake Powell, raising Lake Mead by 2 million acre-feet or more. The decision on how much water to be released from Lake Powell this year will be made following the April 1, 2011 snow surveys in the Colorado River Basin.

Reclamation, IBWC Continue Developing Emergency Storage Agreement with Mexico

Reclamation, the International Boundary and Water Commission, and the Colorado River Basin states continue to work on a proposal that would allow Mexico to store water in Lake Mead this year and next year due to Mexico's inability to use all of its water because of damage from the April 2010 earthquake. It was hoped that an agreement would have been reached several months ago, but the process has been slow due to the formal nature of international negotiations. As most of the major terms of the proposal have been agreed to, it is anticipated that a Treaty Minute will be developed shortly. Staff will provide any recent developments during the November 2010 Committee Meeting.

Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

Warren Brock Reservoir Fills

Construction of the Warren H. Brock Reservoir, formerly known as “Drop 2”, has been completed and the initial fill of the reservoir took place in October. The fill corresponded with a rainstorm in the Colorado desert, so the reservoir captured water that would have otherwise spilled from the system. Following the initial fill, additional testing will be made over the next few months before the project is officially completed and turned over to Reclamation. The project remains under budget, and Metropolitan anticipates receiving an additional rebate of up to \$1 million this fiscal year because of unneeded project contingency.

Below is a photo of the Warren Brock Reservoir after it filled for the first time in October. Metropolitan provided one-sixth of the project’s funding.

