



● Colorado River Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of the activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources during March 2011.

Detailed Report

Yuma Desalting Plan Pilot Operation Ends

On March 26, after nearly a year of successful operation, the pilot operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant came to an end, and preparations were made to return the plant to a dormancy stage. The pilot run, which conserved about 30,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead, concluded when Director Linda Ackerman, who was there on a tour with her constituents, was allowed to push the button ending the operation of the plant. It will take several months of clean-up before the desalting plant is returned to full dormancy.

The reason for shutting down the Yuma Desalting Plant at this time was the limitation in the environmental compliance agreements, which limited the pilot operation to conserve a maximum of 30,000 acre-feet of water. That limitation was reached in March, forcing the plant to be shut down. Because of the success of the pilot operation, there is much interest in operating the desalting plant on a full-scale, longer-duration run. Before that can happen, however, several issues need to be addressed, including new agreements allowing agencies to fund the operation in exchange for storage credits in Lake Mead, consensus on developing a plan to address the wetlands in Mexico that could be affected by operating the plant, and discussions with Mexico as to how operating the plant would fit in with the current binational water management discussions. Metropolitan staff will be working with other agencies on evaluating the aspects of the pilot operation and developing a plan for evaluating longer-term options for the plant.

QSA Parties Meet to Try and Resolve Ongoing Water Right Dispute

On March 23, representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Water District, San Diego County Water Authority, and Metropolitan met to further discuss attempts to resolve the dispute of delivery of non-conserved water to the Salton Sea in 2010. If an agreement among the parties can be reached, it would need to be developed prior to the end of June 2011, the date that Reclamation committed to making a decision in the absence of an agreement among the Quantification Settlement Agreement parties. Any such agreement reached by agency staff would likely require Board approval and be brought to the Board for consideration in May or June 2011.

Colorado River Basin at Highest April 1 Snowpack in 14 Years

The April 1 snowpack and storage conditions mark the trigger point for determining Lake Powell operations for the rest of the year. The results show that the snowpack in the Upper Colorado River Basin is at its highest April 1 level since 1997. It is also the third highest April 1 snowpack since the snow sensors were installed in 1978.

Reclamation is currently conducting its final water supply analyses, but the near-record snowpack virtually assures the additional release of at least 3 million acre-feet of water into Lake Mead this year. After its historic low point of 1,082 feet last October, Lake Mead is now forecast to end 2011 at 1,112 feet; 30 feet higher than it was last fall. If that forecast holds, Lake Mead would end 2011 closer to the surplus than the shortage trigger.