



- Board of Directors  
*Water Planning and Stewardship Committee*

6/14/2011 Board Meeting

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9-1

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## Subject

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Review potential for future land fallowing program in Bard Water District

## Description

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Metropolitan and Bard Water District (Bard) staff have developed concepts of a one-year pilot land fallowing program that, if approved and implemented, could provide Metropolitan with up to 15,000 acre-feet in 2012 or beyond. The unit cost of saved water would fall in the range of that under the Palo Verde Irrigation District/MWD Land Management, Crop Rotation and Water Supply Program (PVID program) with the unit cost depending on the actual water savings per fallowed acre. While this program may not be necessary in the near-term, this letter provides background on how this program could work in the future.

## Background

In July 2004, Metropolitan and Bard initiated discussions to explore a water management partnership through a pilot land fallowing program. Principles of a two-year pilot program were developed; however, in 2007 Bard decided not to pursue negotiations any further. In light of the success of the PVID program, in 2010 Bard's new leadership expressed interest in resuming discussions for a pilot program. As a result of discussions with Bard over the past year, staff from the two agencies developed draft principles for a one-year pilot land fallowing program that could be implemented as early as 2012. The pilot program would test fallowing savings of up to 15,000 acre-feet depending upon the participation level by Bard farmers. Under the pilot program, Metropolitan would enter into (a) fallowing agreements with Bard farmers and compensate them per fallowed acre, and (b) an administrative agreement with Bard to reimburse it for its costs due to the implementation of the program.

The Bard Unit and the "Quechan" Indian Unit together constitute the Reservation Division of the Yuma Project (Yuma Project), a Federal Reclamation Project located in southeastern California. Bard diverts water from the All American Canal for the irrigation of about 7,200 acres within Bard and about 7,600 acres within the "Quechan" Indian Unit. The Yuma Project holds a Priority 2 entitlement to the use of Colorado River water in California and is entitled to the use of water as may be required on currently 15,000 acres of lands. Since Bard and the Quechan Indian Tribe were not parties to the 2003 Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA), the water use by the Yuma Project is not currently capped. Under the terms of the QSA, the amount of water otherwise available to Metropolitan under Priorities 4, 5, or 6a is reduced by any water use by Priorities 1 and 2 (namely, PVID valley lands and the Yuma Project) together with Priority 3(b) (namely, PVID Mesa lands) that is greater than 420,000 acre-feet a year. In years when the amount used by Priorities 1, 2, and 3(b) is less than 420,000 acre-feet, Metropolitan is entitled to the use of the difference between 420,000 acre-feet and the amount used. Since the QSA capped the annual allotments of Priority 3 holders, namely Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), their approval to implement the pilot program would not be required. Metropolitan, holding the fourth priority to the use of Colorado River water in California, could store the conserved water in Lake Mead as Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) or divert and use the water in the year conserved.

Due to Bard's favorable weather conditions, many farmers grow one or more vegetable crops in the fall and winter followed by a field crop (such as wheat or Sudan grass) in the spring and summer. This rotation of crops provides an opportunity to target water savings on either a six-month or a yearly basis. Bard irrigates about

7,200 acres and the average water use is about 3 acre-feet per acre per year. Excluding permanent crops, a maximum of 5,000 acres could potentially participate in the program. A map showing the location of Bard is provided in [Attachment 1](#).

Implementation of the pilot program would provide information that could lead to the development of a longer term water conservation program with Bard. If pursued, such a program could add to the diversity and reliability of Metropolitan’s Colorado River water management programs, providing a reliable water supply at a predictable cost. Staff will provide additional updates to the Board as this potential program develops.

**Policy**

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By Minute Item 42820, dated February 10, 1998, the Board approved the policy principle on Colorado River Resources Strategy that supports voluntary transfers of Colorado River water that result from conserved savings in baseline entitlements and that protects Metropolitan’s interests and its dependable entitlements to Colorado River water, while collaborating with other California’s Colorado River agencies.

**Fiscal Impact**

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No fiscal impacts. Fiscal impacts would occur in the future following Board authorization of the program.

  
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Deven N. Upadhyay  
Manager, Water Resource Management

5/24/2011  
Date

  
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Jeffrey Kightlinger  
General Manager

5/31/2011  
Date

**[Attachment 1 – Location Map for Yuma Project Reservation Division \(Yuma Project\)](#)**

### Location Map for Yuma Project Reservation Division (Yuma Project)



### YUMA PROJECT, RESERVATION DIVISION (BARD UNIT AND INDIAN UNIT)

