



● Colorado River Management Report

Summary

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

Detailed Report

Late Snowfall in May Aids Reservoir Recovery

Heavy snowfall in May added to the record-breaking snowpack levels in the Colorado Basin, further increasing the runoff outlook for the Colorado River this spring and summer. Since the April 1 snow surveys were completed, the runoff forecast into Lake Powell has increased by 2.5 million acre-feet, with most of that water being released into Lake Mead this year. As a result, Lake Mead is now forecast to increase by 45 feet during 2011, and end the year less than 15 feet below the special surplus trigger. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has estimated that there is greater than a 50 percent chance that Metropolitan will have access to special surplus in at least one year between 2013 and 2016. If that were to occur, Metropolitan would receive enough surplus water to fill its Colorado River Aqueduct for that year. The last time Metropolitan received surplus water was in 2002.

Governor Proposes to Eliminate Colorado River Board

In the May revision to his 2011-12 budget, California Governor Jerry Brown proposed to eliminate the Colorado River Board of California (CRB). While he recognized the importance of the CRB in maintaining an adequate water supply from the Colorado River, his revision noted that the CRB was entirely funded by the six water agencies represented on the CRB, and recommended transferring the CRB's functions to a local entity. In response to the Governor's proposal, the six agencies represented on the CRB are exploring options to form a new entity that could take on the existing duties of the CRB. Ultimately, such a proposal would require legislative approval. The recruitment for the Executive Director of the CRB has been postponed until the future of the organization is more certain.

Salinity Control Forum to Evaluate Options for Aging Paradox Valley Well

The Colorado Basin Salinity Control Forum's (Salinity Control Forum) biggest single salinity control project, a deep-well brine injection facility in Paradox Valley, Colorado, is nearing the end of its useful life, and there is risk that the over 100,000 tons of salt that have been prevented from entering the Colorado River each year may no longer be captured. At the May Forum meeting, in response to potential loss of the well in the next few years, Reclamation agreed to implement a pilot evaporation pond project, to determine if the well could be successfully replaced with evaporation ponds. In addition to the pilot project, Reclamation will develop an alternatives report that will evaluate other options for dispensing of the brine, which would otherwise flow into the Colorado River at 250,000 total dissolved solids – about 8 times the concentration of sea water.

In addition to evaluating options for the Paradox well, the Salinity Control Forum evaluated new projects to capture salt loads entering the Colorado River at Glenwood Springs Colorado and La Verkin Springs, tributary to the Virgin River in Utah. The Glenwood Springs area represents the single largest salt load entering the Colorado River in the Upper Basin, where 1,500 tons of salt enter the Colorado River every day. Due to the location of Glenwood Springs, no suitable brine-disposal plan has been identified to date, but the Salinity Control Forum agreed to take a fresh look at attempting to control salt in that area. Metropolitan provides one of California's three members on the Salinity Control Forum.

Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

Colorado River Water Supply and Demand Study Completes First Interim Report

At the end of May, Reclamation and the Colorado River Basin States released the first interim report for the Colorado River Water Supply and Demand Study. The first report evaluates future water supply and demands, taking into account the potential impact of climate change. This interim report is the first of three interim reports that will be released to the public during the next year and a half. The final report is scheduled to be completed in summer of 2012. The report analyzes many potential future scenarios, including one in which the flow of the Colorado River is reduced due to the impacts of climate change. The next phase of the study will evaluate options to address the future supply and demand water supply gap.

In response to release of the first interim report, the major urban water users in the Colorado Basin issued a press release highlighting the efforts already made to reduce municipal water use. It also highlights the efforts urban agencies have made to increase water supply on the Colorado River, including the funding of the Yuma Desalting Plant. It points out that while future conservation will be key, it alone cannot address the issues facing the Colorado River in the future, and that a collaborative, multi-phase approach to managing water supplies will be needed to address projected future water supply gaps.