



● Colorado River Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of the activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River Resources for the month of January 2013.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Basin States, Reclamation Discuss Next Steps for Supply and Demand Study

In January, the Colorado River Basin States (Basin States) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) met to discuss the next steps following the December release of the Colorado River Basin Supply and Demand Study (Basin Study). The Basin Study, funded jointly by the Basin States and Reclamation, evaluated the Colorado River Basin's (Basin) water supply and demand projections for the next 50 years, and evaluated options and strategies to meet the supply and demand gap. The Basin Study also took into account the potential impact of climate change on the resources of the Basin. By 2060, the Basin Study projected that the runoff in the Colorado River would likely be reduced by 9 percent from historic amounts, and that if no further actions were taken, the average supply and demand gap would reach 3.2 million acre-feet by 2060. The Basin Study evaluated different portfolios of options that could meet that gap, which included additional conservation, transfers, and augmentation projects, including large-scale seawater desalination plants. The Basin Study, however, did not make any recommendations about which options to pursue.

The next steps to be taken by the Basin States and Reclamation will be to host a series of workshops at various locations in the Colorado Basin to obtain public input on the Basin Study results. The meetings will occur over the next few months, summarizing the Basin Study and soliciting input on which options are the most promising to implement. Following the meetings, the Basin States and Reclamation will review the input received and determine which specific actions to advance or further evaluate, if necessary.

Basin States, Federal Agencies Plan Implementation of Minute 319

In January, the Basin States met with Reclamation and the International Boundary and Water Commission to plan the implementation of Minute 319 to the United States and Mexico International Water Treaty. Minute 319 and the associated implementing agreements were approved in November 2012, and Mexico has already stored over 100,000 acre-feet of water in United States reservoirs under the agreements. To assist in implementing the agreements, several working groups will be established consisting of staff from Mexico, the United States, and the appropriate agencies in each country. At this time, it is not known how many work groups will be established, but two of the more significant groups include the implementation of the pilot water exchange program and the release of environmental flows to Mexico. The pilot water exchange workgroup, which includes staff from Metropolitan, will oversee implementation of the exchange of conserved water in Mexico to the funding agencies in the United States. The water is scheduled to be deposited in the funding agencies' Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) accounts by 2017. The environmental flow work group will focus on developing a plan to release a base flow and a pulse flow to the Colorado River in Mexico as early as 2014.

Dry Conditions Continue in Colorado River Basin

January continued the string of dry months in the Colorado River Basin, with the runoff into Lake Powell forecast to be about 50 percent of average. As of late January, the snowpack in the Basin is lower than it was last year at this time, which ended up being the third driest year on record. If dry conditions continue this year, it is possible that Lake Powell would reach for the first time the "Mid-elevation Release Tier", which was established in the

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2007 Interim Shortage Guidelines, by the end of this year. If that event happens, instead of releasing the normal 8.23 million acre-feet of water, Lake Powell would only release 7.48 million acre-feet of water next year; lower than any amount during the current drought. Such lower release would hasten the decline of Lake Mead and bring the possibility of a shortage declaration in the Lower Basin in 2015. While conditions could change this winter, with each passing dry week the possibility for reduced releases increases. Staff will provide an updated analysis during the February 2013 Water Planning and Stewardship Committee meeting.