



- 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 August 2013.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Reclamation Notifies IID of Risk of Exceeding Entitlement

On August 9, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) sent a letter to Imperial Irrigation District (IID) notifying IID that its 2013 consumptive use might exceed its adjusted entitlement in 2013. In 2013, IID's approved Colorado River water order was adjusted downward to meet the requirement to payback to Lake Mead about 51,000 acre-feet of water from prior year overruns. On August 1, IID's consumptive use forecast exceeded that approved amount, and per the requirements of the Inadvertent Overrun and Payback Policy, Reclamation notified IID of potential enforcement proceedings if IID does not reduce its consumptive use forecast by the end of the year. The letter noted that IID's consumptive use forecast had been as high as 28,000 acre-feet above its approved water order earlier this year.

Since Reclamation's letter was mailed on August 9, IID's consumptive use forecast has dropped, and is now within its adjusted entitlement. Part of the reason for IID's reduced consumptive use has been significant precipitation in the Imperial Valley during late August, with parts of the Valley receiving over 1 inch of rain. As of August 31, IID's consumptive use forecast is about 21,000 acre-feet below its adjusted water order approval.

Reclamation Announces Reduced Releases from Lake Powell

On August 16, in response to continued drought conditions in the Colorado River Basin, Reclamation announced that it plans to reduce releases from Lake Powell by 750,000 acre-feet in the 2014 water year (October 2013 through September 2014). The reduced releases, totaling 7.48 million acre-feet, are in response to low water levels in Lake Powell. Per the requirements of the 2007 Interim Guidelines for operation of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, in most cases when Lake Powell storage falls below 9.52 million acre-feet, reservoir releases are to be reduced from 8.23 to 7.48 million acre-feet. Releases from Lake Powell have not been as low as 7.48 million acre-feet since the reservoir began filling in the 1960s.

The reduced releases from Lake Powell will result in a further decline in Lake Mead storage. Lake Mead is forecast to drop 24 feet by the fall of 2014, reaching an elevation of 1,081 feet: six feet above the trigger for a first-ever shortage declaration on the Colorado River. The current outlook now projects that a shortage declaration will likely be issued by Reclamation in the summer of 2015; however, that forecast could change if wet conditions return to the Colorado Basin in the next year or two.

In response to the impacts of the prolonged Colorado River drought, the Colorado River Basin States and Reclamation have been meeting to explore options that could be implemented in the near term to reduce the potential impacts of the drought. Staff will keep the Board updated on these discussions as they develop.