



- Colorado River Management Report

## Summary

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This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for the month of October 2014.

## Purpose

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Informational

## Detailed Report

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### Salinity Control Forum Approves 2014 Water Quality Standard Review

At its meeting on October 30, the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum approved the 2014 Review of Water Quality Standards for Salinity of the Colorado River System. The report, which is updated every three years, concluded that the Salinity Control Program captures a total of 1.3 million tons of salts annually that would otherwise enter the Colorado River. Two primary measures are used to keep salt out of the river: (1) funding agricultural conservation activities, which minimizes water from percolating into the deep soils containing salt, and (2) operating the Paradox Valley well, which captures natural brine spring water before it enters the Delores River (tributary to the Colorado River) and injects it nearly two miles below the surface. These efforts have reduced the salinity of the Colorado River at Lake Havasu by about 90 milligrams per liter from what it would have been without any action.

The report also concluded that due to the residual effect of drought conditions and additional Upper Basin development, the salinity of the Colorado River is likely to increase in the near term. Additional programs are needed to minimize or avoid this projected salinity increase. The report identifies the potential for 1.2 million tons of additional salt control annually, mostly through new agricultural programs, is possible with sufficient funding. Federal funding for the salinity program has been reduced in recent years, which slows the development of new projects. Metropolitan has made full federal funding for the Salinity Control Program a legislative priority for the upcoming fiscal year.

### Improved Near-term Water Outlook

The Colorado River Basin saw a very wet late-summer, early-fall period, with monsoonal rains affecting nearly the entire Basin. As a result, both Lake Powell and Lake Mead saw improved conditions from what had been anticipated earlier this year. On October 16, the Bureau of Reclamation updated its near-term outlook for shortage and surplus declarations for the Colorado River. While there is still a significant likelihood of the Department of Interior issuing a first-ever shortage declaration within the next five years, that probability has been reduced in the next few years. Currently the probability of a shortage declaration is zero in 2015 and 25 percent in 2016. These lower figures benefit Metropolitan and all Colorado River water entitlement holders.

### QSA Coordination Meeting

On October 27, the parties to the Colorado River Water Delivery Agreement (also known as the federal QSA) met to coordinate implementation of the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA). This semi-annual meeting was formed in 2013 to better coordinate the various aspects of the QSA, and includes staff from Coachella Valley Water District, Imperial Irrigation District (IID), San Diego County Water Authority, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Metropolitan. Based on the information from that meeting, it appears all of the QSA transfers are on track in 2014, including the delivery of 90,000 acre-feet of conserved water to the Salton Sea this year. Additionally, IID is on track to fully repay its Inadvertent Overrun Payback obligation of 117,000 acre-feet in 2014. In addition to the QSA transfers, SNWA anticipates making 60,000 acre-feet of water available to Metropolitan this year as part of its long-term exchange program.

## Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

### **Bureau of Reclamation Seeks Participation in Pilot System Conservation Program**

In mid-October, the Bureau of Reclamation sent a request for proposals to all but the smallest Colorado River water users to participate in the Pilot System Conservation Program, which is being funded by the Bureau of Reclamation, SNWA, Central Arizona Project, Denver Water, and Metropolitan. The Bureau of Reclamation's letter is seeking voluntary participation for water users to develop municipal, industrial, and agricultural projects that can conserve Colorado River water over the next two years, through actions such as using water more efficiently, reducing water use, and temporary fallowing of land. Proposals are due to the Bureau of Reclamation by November 17, 2014.

Once the proposals have been received, the funding parties will review them and determine which ones to pursue. Factors that will be considered in the review include cost, geographic diversity, and ability of the project to add water to Lake Mead.