



- Colorado River Management Report

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for the month of March 2015.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) Holds Workshop on Salton Sea Petition

On March 18, the State Board held a workshop to solicit comments regarding the status of restoration activities at the Salton Sea, and to explore potential changes to State Board Order WRO 2002-0013, which authorized the transfer of water from Imperial Irrigation District (IID) to San Diego County Water Authority and Coachella Valley Water District. The State Board's workshop was in response to IID's November 18, 2014 petition to the State Board, which requested that new conditions be placed on Order WRO 2002-2013, including conditioning the continuation of the transfers on state of California's development and implementation of a restoration plan for the Salton Sea.

The State Board received comments from a multitude of interested parties. Metropolitan submitted comments, which included the following points: (1) the State Board should avoid re-opening disputes for its jurisdiction over the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA); (2) the 2003 QSA legislation included a potential funding source for Salton Sea restoration activities by, if consistent with a Salton Sea restoration plan, allowing a portion of the conserved mitigation water to be transferred to the California Department of Water Resources for purchase by Metropolitan, with the proceeds of the sale benefitting the Salton Sea; and (3) long-term restoration of the Salton Sea should be addressed in broader forums than the State Board. Other interested parties focused on health impacts related to air pollution in the Imperial Valley and the need for state oversight in implementing a plan to restore the Salton Sea. State Board staff indicated that they would develop options for further State Board review and action, although it is not clear when staff will bring back any recommendations for consideration.

Colorado River Basin impacted by Warm, Dry March

The month of March saw record heat and little snowfall in the Colorado River Basin, and as a result the runoff forecast dropped by nearly 1.5 million acre-feet during the month. The April 1 runoff forecast for the Colorado River is down to 52 percent of average, making 2015 one of the drier years on record. As a result of the lower spring runoff, Lake Powell storage will drop significantly in 2015, and the releases from Lake Powell into Lake Mead could also drop, increasing the likelihood of a shortage declaration to the Lower Basin states in the near future. Earlier estimates forecast about a 20 percent chance of a shortage in 2016 followed by over a 50 percent chance in 2017; those figures are expected to increase when the Bureau of Reclamation updates its operational studies later this month. While Metropolitan's basic apportionment and QSA transfers are not directly affected by a shortage, its ability to access Intentionally Created Surplus water from Lake Mead and its interstate exchange programs could be impacted.

Metropolitan Hosts Colorado River Board Meeting

Metropolitan hosted the March Colorado River Board meeting at its facilities at Diamond Valley Lake. The meeting included a tour of the area, cohosted by Metropolitan and Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), which included Diamond Valley Lake, the Wadsworth Pumping Plant, and the local water recycling distribution system developed by EMWD.