



- 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 May 2016.

## Purpose

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Informational

## Detailed Report

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### **Lake Mead Reaches Historic Low Level**

On May 18, Lake Mead fell to its lowest level since the reservoir was initially filled in the 1930s, and by the end of May reached an all-time low elevation of 1,073.9 feet above sea level (37 percent full). It is anticipated that Lake Mead will reach this year's low point in early summer, and then slowly rebound and finish the year above 1,075 feet – the elevation that would trigger a first-ever shortage declaration,. If the storage levels end up as projected, 2017 will not be a shortage year because of the actions taken by Lower Basin entities to reduce water diversions. Central Arizona Project (CAP), Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), Imperial Irrigation District, and Metropolitan have all added water to Lake Mead through the Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) Program. Additionally, several urban agencies and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) have funded conservation projects that have added system water to Lake Mead. These actions will likely forestall a first-ever Colorado River shortage declaration for at least one more year.

### **Six Agency Committee Approves Funding for System Conservation Projects**

Following Metropolitan's May Board meeting, on May 11 the Six Agency Committee, which supports the Colorado River Board of California, approved the contribution of up to \$500,000 to fund Lower Colorado River Basin projects being considered for selection as system conservation pilot projects. The pilot projects provide compensation for voluntary reductions in water use to benefit the Colorado River system, increasing the amount of water in storage in Lake Mead in the Lower Basin. Reclamation, Metropolitan, CAP, Denver Water, and the SNWA are evaluating proposals received in response to Reclamation's second request for proposals. The Six Agency Committee will provide funding equal to Metropolitan's additional contributions, which limits the amount of additional funding provided by Metropolitan to \$500,000.

### **Metropolitan Issues Bard Farmers First Fallowing Payment**

Following inspection of lands in Bard Water District by Metropolitan staff to ensure program compliance, in mid-May Metropolitan issued its first fallowing payment to the Bard farmers that are participating in the seasonal fallowing pilot program. Per the terms of the agreement, participating farmers are to ensure that their lands enrolled in the pilot program are fallowed from April 1 through July 31. Land in the fallowing program must have a physical barrier in place, such as a lock on a gate, to prevent water from being released onto the fields. All of the land enrolled in the pilot program met that requirement, and per the agreement, Metropolitan paid the farmers 50 percent of the annual fallowing payment in May, with the remaining 50 percent due in September 2016 following final verification for the year.

### **Reclamation Issues 2015 Colorado River Water Use Report**

On May 15, Reclamation issued its 2015 Colorado River Water Accounting Report, which documents all of the water use, transfers, storage, and other relevant water use information for the preceding year. Reclamation has issued these reports each year since 1964, when the Supreme Court Decree in Arizona vs. California ordered the Secretary of the Interior to prepare Colorado River accounting reports annually. Each year, the report gets more complicated with the increase in water transfers, addition of the ICS program in 2007, and other information that

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water agencies track very closely. Despite the increased complexity in the report, Reclamation is committed to finalize its report by May 15 of each year. Until that report is finalized, Metropolitan cannot be sure of the exact amount of ICS it has stored in Lake Mead. With the issuance of the final report, staff can now confirm that Metropolitan has exactly 80,405 acre-feet of ICS credits remaining that are available this year, if needed.