



- 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 June 2016.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Salinity Control Program to Consider Water Conservation Savings

At its June meeting in Colorado, the Colorado River Salinity Control Forum (Forum) agreed that both salinity reduction and water conservation benefits be considered when evaluating funding for future Salinity Control Program projects. Under the existing program, projects compete for funding, and generally the projects that remove the most salt per dollar spent are awarded funding from the program. Starting next year, the amount of water conserved by a program will be considered along with the salinity benefit when determining which programs to fund. The Salinity Control Program, which is jointly funded by the federal government and agencies within the Colorado River Basin states, has been successful in maintaining a steady salinity level in the Colorado River despite long-term drought conditions, which reduces the amount of water to dilute salt levels in the River. With Lake Mead reaching an all-time low level this year, the Forum determined that both the quality and the quantity of water in the Colorado River are important to protect.

The October 2016 meeting of the Forum will include an event celebrating the 20-year anniversary of the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Paradox Valley Brine Disposal Project (Project). For the last two decades, the Project has been capturing high-saline groundwater in excess of 250,000 parts per million of salt (more than seven times saltier than ocean water) and injecting the brine 3 miles below the surface. The Project captures 110,000 tons of salt that would otherwise enter the Colorado River each year. The Project is nearing the end of its useful life, and Reclamation and the Forum are evaluating options to continue to prevent the brine from reaching the Colorado River in the future, which include building a replacement well or constructing evaporation ponds. California's representatives of the Forum are the Colorado River Board's Tanya Trujillo, the State Water Resources Control Board's Tom Howard, and Metropolitan's Bill Hasencamp.

Colorado River Drought Contingency Discussions Continue

The larger Colorado River contractors in California continued discussions in June to try to reach consensus on a Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan. The discussions included how contractors within California would share any reductions in California if Lake Mead were to continue to decline to critically low levels. The discussions also included how to provide sufficient flexibility to help California contractors efficiently use their Colorado River water supplies for the full range of Lake Mead operating conditions. If a consensus is ultimately reached, each agency's respective boards would consider the draft agreement, which would significantly reduce the likelihood of Lake Mead falling below the elevation of 1,025 feet – an elevation of critical concern – during the ten-year term of the agreement.

Colorado River Travelling Museum Proposal Moves Forward

On June 23, the first meeting of the advisory committee for the proposed Colorado River Travelling Museum met at the Springs Preserve in Las Vegas. The proposed travelling museum would highlight the historical, cultural, environmental, and societal aspects of the Colorado River, as well as highlight the benefits of its water and power resources. Once the museum exhibits have been developed, they would travel to each of the Colorado River Basin states for a few months and ultimately end up in Washington, D.C. The Chicago Field museum staff has

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been selected to work with the representatives of the Colorado River Basin states to develop a proposal for the exhibit. Metropolitan is one of the funding agencies for the proposal and has a seat on the advisory council, which at its first meeting discussed the goals of the project, what aspects of the Colorado River to highlight, and how to develop exhibits that can effectively be transported on a regular basis. Another role of the advisory committee is to determine how to fund the projects once the proposal is finalized.

State of California Budgets \$80.5 million for the Salton Sea

In late June, Governor Brown signed the state budget, which included \$80.5 million for the Salton Sea, which is planned to fund the design and environmental documentation for the first phase of the state's Salton Sea Management Plan. The money will also fund construction of wetland areas around the edges of the Salton Sea, which would provide habitat for targeted species and dust control. The Resources Agency, which is responsible for developing a restoration plan for the Salton Sea, has estimated that full implementation of the Salton Sea Management Plan would cost an estimated \$1.5 to \$2.5 billion.

On June 24, following an April 25, 2016 oversight Hearing on the Salton Sea, the Little Hoover Commission sent a letter to Governor Brown urging the state to address the problems facing the Salton Sea before it becomes a major health crisis. The Commission noted recent progress by the state to take a greater role in addressing Salton Sea challenges, but stated that much more needs to be done expeditiously. The letter offered some recommendations, including making the Salton Sea a top priority, ensuring adequate resources to get the job done, closely tracking project implementation, assessing Salton Sea management costs, and developing a funding strategy.