



● 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 January 2017.

Purpose

Informational.

Attachments

Table: Colorado River System Conservation Agreement Projects Approved in 2016.

Detailed Report

U. S. Department of the Interior Secretary Issues Order Regarding the Colorado River

On January 18, Sally Jewell, Secretary of the U. S. Department of the Interior (Interior), issued Secretarial Order No. 3344 (Order) directing the staff of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to continue work on the following Drought Response efforts initiated during the Obama administration:

- The Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) – a set of agreements that would address conservation, storage, and federal water operations;
- The DCP+, an intra-Arizona agreement to conserve additional water in Lake Mead through 2017-2019;
- A Minute to the Mexican Water Treaty (Minute 32X) – this Minute may include provisions regarding shortage sharing, conservation and riparian enhancement;
- The Upper Basin Drought Memorandum of Agreement – an agreement regarding operation of Colorado River Storage Project facilities to reduce or avoid Lake Powell reaching critical elevations; and
- Consultation with Tribes regarding Drought Response efforts.

Concurrent with issuance of the Order, Reclamation also:

- Finalized an agreement with the Gila River Indian Community to conserve water within Lake Mead intended to decrease the risk of shortages and support the State of Arizona's efforts to finalize its DCP+ Plan.
- Signed an addendum to the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between Interior and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) regarding the Coordination of Activities to Manage the Salton Sea. The addendum is intended to strengthen coordinated efforts by CNRA and Interior to address anticipated changes in the Salton Sea's elevation.

The Order notes that the Colorado River is experiencing an extended period of historic drought, the worst 17-year period of drought since flow records have been kept, and that the ongoing drought conditions and hydrologic conditions have increased the possibility that the Lower Basin would face reductions in deliveries from the Colorado River. As a result of the drought and declining reservoir levels, in July 2016 Lake Mead reached its lowest elevation since the reservoir initially began filling in the 1930s. Lake Mead is currently at elevation 1,083 feet. If the elevation at Lake Mead at the beginning of the calendar-year is projected to be at or below 1075 feet, the first shortage condition in the Lower Basin would be declared, resulting in reduced water allocations to Nevada and Arizona.

Metropolitan has worked closely with Reclamation in development of the Drought Response efforts. If Reclamation nears completion of any of these efforts, authorization from the Metropolitan Board of Directors (Board) will be requested.

Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

The Order is not binding on the new administration.

Agreement Signed Extending Emergency Deliveries to Mexico

Since 1972, the government of Mexico has periodically requested assistance from the United States for emergency water deliveries for the Tijuana region to respond to drought conditions, aqueduct construction and repairs, or water distribution infrastructure problems. Under a series of agreements, Metropolitan and agencies in San Diego assisted in making those deliveries. On November 8, 2016, the Board authorized the General Manager to execute the next agreement in that series of agreements to provide temporary emergency delivery of a portion of the Mexican Treaty Waters of the Colorado River to the international boundary in the vicinity of Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico (Minute Item 50636). The agreement was executed on January 18, and the accompanying international agreements, the Joint Report, and Minute 322 were executed on January 18, and January 19, respectively. The agreement will cover a period of five years, similar to previous agreements, and will provide fair compensation to Metropolitan for the deliveries.

Colorado River System Conservation Pilot Program 2016 Implementation Activities

In July 2014, Reclamation, Central Arizona Project, Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), Denver Water, and Metropolitan (collectively, the funding agencies) entered into an agreement to establish a two-year pilot program that would compensate selected projects implementing voluntary reductions in water use for the benefit of the Colorado River System as a whole.

The pilot program is intended to determine the feasibility of using voluntary, compensated reductions in water to partially mitigate the impacts of ongoing drought on the Colorado River System, by increasing water elevation levels in Lakes Mead and Powell with the ancillary benefit of enhancing flows in areas upstream of storage reservoirs. Under the pilot program, the funding agencies jointly select projects in the Colorado River Basin to create conserved water for the benefit of the Colorado River System. In 2016 the funding partners made approximately \$8.8 million additional funds available for new pilot projects. Of that \$8.8 million, \$5.3 million was made available by Reclamation and the remaining \$3.5 million was made available by the non-federal parties.

Since last year's report to the Board, a total of 27 new projects are under contract. These contracts represent a greater geographical diversity, and cover all basin states: nine in Wyoming, nine in Colorado, two in New Mexico, one in Utah, four in Arizona, one in California, and one in Nevada. Of these 27 projects, 18 are projects that temporarily reduce agricultural irrigation, either through fallowing or split season deficit irrigation. The remaining nine projects include: three that reduce groundwater storage/diversion, three organic transition, one tributary conservation, one turf removal, and one irrigation efficiency improvement project.

The contracted projects are estimated to conserve a total of over 66,000 AF of water. It is estimated that almost 90 percent of the savings will occur from projects in the Lower Basin. While there are fewer projects in Lower Basin states, these projects result in greater water savings. The attached table lists the contracted projects approved in 2016.

The review committee has begun evaluating the proposals submitted for consideration for implementation in 2017 for projects in the Upper Basin. A total of 46 proposals were received across all four Upper Basin states; one stream restoration project, with the remaining projects being a mix of fallowing, deficit irrigation, and alternative cropping. While the proposals include many fallowing and deficit irrigation projects, there is increased geographical diversity, applications from groups of farmers within the same watershed to improve efficiency in making sure the water gets to Lake Powell. Additional information is being gathered for the proposals and the funding agencies are scheduled to make a decision on which proposals to fund in early 2017. A total of \$1.8 million is available for these projects.

Colorado River System Conservation Agreement Projects Approved in 2016

Project Partner	State	Project Type	Total Estimated Water Conserved (AF)
CAP	AZ	Agricultural – Mixed	25,265
City of Needles	CA	Turf Removal	2,870
City of Pueblo	CO	Reduced Diversions	200
Lawrence Stock	NM	Fallowing	152
Piney Creeks Ranch	WY	Fallowing	1,135
City of Bloomfield	NM	Irrigation Efficiency	35
Milk Creek Ranch	CO	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	84
Mountain King Ranch	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	1,226
Cottonwood Capital Corporation	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	482
Anders Ranch	CO	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	98
Redmon	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	110
Willow Island Ranch	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	70
Barnes Ranch	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	466
High Lonesome Ranch	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	1,143
McKinley Ranch	CO	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	137
P/T Livestock Inc.	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	178
Rainbow Glass	UT	Organic Transition	1,279
Nauyokas	CO	Organic Transition	72
Kehmeier	CO	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	156
Kruthaupt	CO	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	100
McCracken	CO	Organic Transition	60
Fishhook Land	WY	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	395
Tohono O'odham Nation	AZ	Reduction in GW Storage	9,817
Colorado River Indian Tribes	AZ	Fallowing	8,572
Gila River Indian Community	AZ	Reduction in GW Storage	10,000
SNWA	NV	Tributary Conservation	2,580
Harold	CO	Split Season Deficit Irrigation	110