



• 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 February 2019.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Drought Contingency Plan

On February 2, the Department of the Interior through the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) issued a Notice in the Federal Register requesting input from the Governors' representatives from each of the seven Colorado River Basin States in the event that the Upper Basin and Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plans (DCP) cannot be completed and promptly adopted. The comment period ends March 18, 2019. If all seven States have authorized the DCPs by that date, Reclamation will rescind the Federal Register notice.

As of January 31, 2019, the previous DCP authorization deadline given by Reclamation, the only entities that have not yet provided authorization of the interstate DCP agreements are the Imperial Irrigation District and the state of Arizona. The State of Arizona has indicated that it intends to meet the deadline and authorize the DCP by March 18. The Imperial Irrigation District's board authorized the intrastate DCP agreements at its December 10, 2018 board meeting with conditions that likely cannot be met by the March 18 deadline.

After the Federal Register Notice was issued, General Manager asked staff to prepare an analysis of an alternative in which Metropolitan assumes California's obligation under the Lower Basin DCP on behalf of California and a proposal to authorize that approach is on the Board's agenda for March 11 - 12, 2019.

Colorado River System Conservation Pilot Program 2018 Implementation Activities

In July 2014, Reclamation, Central Arizona Project, Southern Nevada Water Authority, 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.

Since last year's report to the Board, a total of 25 new projects are under contract. Of these contracts, a total of 19 were for projects in the Upper Basin, with the remaining 6 projects in the Lower Basin. These contracts were executed for conservation that occurred in 2018, with some projects having ongoing conservation into 2019, and have exhausted the available funding.

The increase in Upper Basin contracts for projects in Utah and New Mexico continued, with six projects in Utah, three in New Mexico, eight in Wyoming, and two in Colorado. All of these projects were for fallowing or partial season fallowing/split-season deficit irrigation. This past year saw participation by larger entities or groups of farmers and so total expected conservation approximately doubled from the projects approved in 2017. This was facilitated by a more streamlined contracting process implemented in 2018.

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On June 20, 2018, the Upper Colorado River Commission passed a resolution to cease acting as the contracting entity for the program after its current commitments have been fulfilled in favor of exploring administrative, technical, operational, economic, and legal considerations within the Upper Basin as it pertains to demand management, both in general and the Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan efforts.

While there has been no similar action by USBR in the Lower Basin, there was no effort to increase funding in 2018 for future projects that may compete with DCP efforts.