



## ● Colorado River Management Report

### Summary

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This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River recourses for the month of March 2019.

### Purpose

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Informational

### Detailed Report

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#### **Basin States send Drought Contingency Plan to Congress**

Following Metropolitan's approval of the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) at its March 12 Board meeting, on March 19, the Colorado River Basin States (Basin States) met in Phoenix and signed a letter transmitting the proposed DCP legislation and agreements to Congress. Peter Nelson, chairman of the Colorado River Board of California, was able to sign the letter on behalf of California, as his agency approved the draft legislation during a special meeting of his board on March 18. To accommodate concerns from Imperial Irrigation District, the proposed legislation was altered to focus more narrowly on reservoir operations, which would allow Metropolitan to recover Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) supplies stored in Lake Mead during a declared shortage.

Following transmittal of the documents to Congress, the Basin States' representatives provided testimony on the benefits of the DCP during congressional hearings on March 27 and 28. Peter Nelson testified on behalf of California, highlighting the benefits of the DCP and noting that its implementation will have no impact to the Salton Sea. Staff will provide an update on the status of the DCP approval process during April's Water Planning and Stewardship Committee Meeting.

#### **Colorado Basin receives Significant Snowfall**

During March, heavy snowfall continued to fall throughout the Colorado River Basin. By mid-March, the River Forecast Center had increased the snowmelt runoff to 133 percent of average, which, if that forecast holds, would be the second wettest year since 2000. With the increased snowfall, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is no longer forecasting a shortage in 2020. Even with the wetter conditions, implementation of the Drought Contingency Plan is a high priority to Metropolitan, as the DCP would increase the amount of water that Metropolitan can store in Lake Mead in 2019, as well as increase Metropolitan's total ICS storage capacity.

#### **Earthquake Reported at Paradox Valley Salinity Control Well**

On March 4, a magnitude 4.1 earthquake rumbled through the Paradox Valley in western Colorado, which Reclamation believes is most likely the result of brine groundwater injections from the Salinity Control Program. About 205,000 tons of salt pass from the Paradox Valley into the Delores River, which is tributary to the Colorado River. During the mid-1990s, Reclamation constructed a well to capture about half of that salt and inject it 3 miles below the surface. Earthquakes have been occurring in the area with increased frequency, and as a result, Reclamation has reduced the injection of brine into the ground. With the recent 4.1 magnitude earthquake, Reclamation has shut the well down until it can assess the current circumstances and see if the well can be operated safely in the future. In the meantime, Reclamation is completing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate long-term options to the aging well, including drilling a new well, using evaporation ponds, or using zero liquid discharge technology. The EIS is a few years from completion.