



● 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 April 2019.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Federal Legislation Authorizing Drought Contingency Plan Implementation Passes Congress

The seven Colorado River Basin States sent a letter to Congress on March 19, 2019, asking for adoption of federal legislation that would direct the Secretary of the Department of Interior to sign and implement without delay four agreements related to the Upper and Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plans (DCP). On March 27, 2019 the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Natural Resources Committee held an oversight hearing on the DCP. This hearing was followed the next day by the Water, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee's oversight hearing on the DCP. On April 10, 2019 the House and Senate passed identical bills authorizing the DCP. The House version was approved by the Senate on April 11 and signed by the President on April 16. It is anticipated that the Secretary of the Interior will sign the DCP during May, and it would become effective after that event.

Imperial Irrigation District Files CEQA Petition Against Metropolitan

On April 16, the same day that the President signed the federal DCP legislation into law, the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) filed a petition for writ of mandate under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in California Superior Court in Los Angeles County against Metropolitan seeking to block implementation of the Lower Basin DCP. Specifically, IID asks the Court to vacate Metropolitan's December 2018 and March 2019 approvals of the Lower Basin DCP, suspend any actions related to furtherance of the Lower Basin DCP until Metropolitan has "complied with all requirements of CEQA and all other applicable laws," and seeks an injunction restraining Metropolitan from taking any action in furtherance of the Lower Basin DCP "pending full compliance with CEQA." The petition was served on Metropolitan on April 22, 2019, after which Metropolitan has sixty days to respond to the petition and provide information related to the administrative record.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Issues April 24-Month Study

Based on predictions of the most probable inflow into Lake Powell, the Bureau of Reclamation's releases from Lake Powell to Lake Mead will shift to balancing releases during the remainder of water year 2019. This operation is consistent with the Upper Elevation Balancing Tier. Total releases from Lake Powell will increase from the previously planned 8.23 million acre-feet (MAF), and will most likely reach the maximum 9 MAF total release, depending on actual reservoir elevations during the remainder of the year. As a result, there is essentially no risk of shortages in the Colorado River Basin for 2020. The Bureau of Reclamation's April 24-Month Study Most Probable Inflow Scenario predicts similar releases will be made in 2020.

Paradox Valley Salinity Control Well to be Offline for Extended Time Period

As reported in the April Colorado River Management Report, on March 4, a 4.1 magnitude earthquake occurred in the Paradox Valley in western Colorado, which Reclamation believes is most likely the result of brine groundwater injections from the Paradox well. Following the earthquake, Reclamation shut down the well while it assessed whether the well can be operated at a safe level. Following their initial analysis, Reclamation now projects that the well will need to be shut down for at least 6 months, while a more thorough analysis is completed. The concern with the last earthquake was that, unlike in past events, the pressure within the well did

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not increase before the earthquake, so there was no indication that the earthquake risk was increasing. Each month that the well is offline, about 17,000 tons of salt enter the Delores River and eventually flow into the Colorado River above Lake Powell. The risks with the current well highlight the urgency for Reclamation to complete its Environmental Impact Statement and implement options to replace the well.