



● 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 November 2020.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Pilot Program to Quantify Agricultural Water Savings Moves Forward

In September 2019, Metropolitan, Central Arizona Water Conservation District, and Southern Nevada Water Authority (project team) were awarded a \$200,000 matching-funds grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to conduct a research study under Reclamation's Colorado River Basin Study Program. The aim of the study is to evaluate methods of quantifying agricultural water conservation in the Lower Colorado River Basin (Lower Basin), focusing on case studies of seasonal fallowing, deficit irrigation, and irrigation improvements (e.g., conversion from flood irrigation to sprinklers), and to suggest methodological improvements to better guide future investments in Lower Basin agricultural conservation.

In September 2020, the project team (including Reclamation) selected a consultant team of Natural Resources Consulting Engineers and Jacobs to carry out the study. In November, the project team hosted the first of three planned workshops to solicit feedback from a wide range of stakeholders in the Lower Basin, including agricultural districts, tribal representatives, and state agencies. In the workshop, the project team presented the background of the study in the Colorado River Basin Supply and Demand Study (USBR 2012), the study objectives, the project scope-of-work, and invited stakeholder discussion. The aim of the second workshop, planned for March 2021, will be to identify appropriate case studies for investigation. A final report is anticipated by the end of 2021.

Dry Conditions Lead to Forecast of Reservoir Declines

Following a record hot and dry spring and summer, the fall conditions for the new water year continue the dry trend, with well below average snowpack conditions going into December. As a result, Reclamation updated its monthly reservoir forecast model, which showed the potential for Lake Mead to fall to record low levels by the end of next year. While Lake Mead is currently well above a shortage trigger and is about the same level it has been for the last 7 years, the forecast shows that if conditions do not improve, Lake Mead could drop 20 feet over the next 2 years. It is still relatively early in the water year, and conditions could change in the next few key months, but as of now reservoir levels are projected to drop. Metropolitan's water supply situation remains in good shape, however, as it has over 1 million acre-feet in storage in Lake Mead in addition to flexible water transfer and exchange programs. Metropolitan is able to recover water from Lake Mead even in a shortage condition.