



## ● Colorado River Management Report

### Summary

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This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for the month of January 2021.

### Purpose

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Informational

### Detailed Report

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#### **Reclamation to Terminate NEPA Process for Paradox Valley Unit without Issuing a Record of Decision**

In December 2020, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) issued the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Paradox Valley Unit and determined that no action was the preferred alternative in the document that evaluated long-term options to control salt in the Paradox Valley. Metropolitan, along with more than a dozen other agencies in California and other states, sent letters to Commissioner Burman urging Reclamation to not issue a Record of Decision (ROD) for the EIS and instead work with the seven Colorado River Basin States (Basin States) to find a long-term salt control alternative that is acceptable to Reclamation and Colorado River water users. In response to the letters received, in January, Reclamation determined that it would not issue a ROD for the EIS and would work collaboratively with the Basin States in furthering the objectives of the salinity control program. With the EIS process completed, the Salinity Control Forum, which has representatives from each Basin State, will urge Reclamation to restart the existing brine injection well in the Paradox Valley at some level and develop a long-term salt control solution for the Paradox Valley.

#### **Reclamation Letter to Upper Division States Regarding Drought Contingency Plan**

With a second year of very dry conditions forecasted for the Upper Colorado River Basin, Reclamation sent a letter to the Upper Colorado River Commission and the Upper Division States to initiate enhanced monitoring and coordination under the Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) of the Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan. The DROA requires the Secretary of the Department of Interior (Secretary) to notify both the Upper and Lower Basin States whenever the 24-Month Study shows that Lake Powell will fall below the elevation of 3,525 feet, using the Minimum Probable hydrology, which occurred in the January study. When that happens, the agreement requires the Secretary to begin monthly modeling meetings with the Upper Division States until the Minimum Probable 24-Month Study projects that Lake Powell will consistently stay above the elevation of 3,525 feet for a full 24-Month period. The modeling meetings will include discussion of hydrology, system conditions, and status of the Colorado River Storage Project Act initial units.

#### **Basin States Letter of Support - Commissioner of International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC)**

The governor's representatives of the Basin States sent a letter to the Biden administration indicating support for retaining the current IBWC Commissioner Jayne Harkins. Commissioner Harkins was appointed to the position by President Trump in 2018. In this letter, the Basin States noted the importance of the United States' relationship with Mexico in the upcoming process to establish new guidelines for river operations, and that retaining Ms. Harkins would provide valuable continuity in this important role.

#### **Bard Farmers Respond to Metropolitan's Fallowing Call**

Last fall, Metropolitan issued a fallowing call requesting that up to 3,000 acres of land in Bard Water District be fallowed from April through July of 2021. The farmers responded to that fallowing call for the full amount sought by Metropolitan. This year will be the second year of the program, and it is anticipated to provide 6,000 acre-feet to Metropolitan's available supplies this year. If Metropolitan doesn't need the water to meet demands this year, it can be stored in Lake Mead for delivery in a future year.

## Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

### **Water Managers, Farmers, and NGOs Respond to New York Times Article regarding Private Investment in the Colorado River**

In response to a January 3, [New York Times Article](#) that described how private investors from Wall Street could redefine century-old rules for who controls the Colorado River, a conglomeration of water managers, the Family Farm Alliance, and conservation organizations responded with editorials providing a different viewpoint for how the Colorado River should best be managed. The first article, [Lasting Colorado River solutions come from Main Street, not Wall Street](#), appeared in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel on January 17 and was written by the executive director of the Family Farm Alliance and conservation agencies in the Upper Colorado Basin. The second article, [Opinion: On this one thing, 9 Colorado water managers agree. Venture capital has circled Colorado water before. This time, investors are posturing as the only solution to a climate change driven reduction in the flows of our rivers.](#), appeared in the Colorado Sun on January 29 and was written by several agricultural and municipal water agency general managers in the state of Colorado.