

Minutes of Meeting
COLORADO RIVER BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
Wednesday, September 14, 2016.

A meeting of the Colorado River Board of California was held on Wednesday, September 14, 2016.

Board Members and Alternates Present

Stephen Benson
Brian Brady
Dana Bart Fisher, Jr., Chairman
Henry Kuiper
Glen Peterson
John Powell Jr.

Jack Seiler
Michael Touhey
David Vigil
Jeanine Jones, Designee
Department of Water Resources

Board Members and Alternates Absent

James Hanks
Peter Nelson
David Pettijohn

Chris Hayes, Designee
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Doug Wilson

Others Present

Steve Abbott
Melissa Baum-Haley
Tim Blair
Karen Donovan
Bill Hasencamp
Ned Hyduke
Michael Hughes
Tom Levy
Kara Mathews
Jan Matusak
Jessica Neuwerth
Vic Nguyen
Angela Rashid
Tom Ryan
Ed Smith
Philip Southard
Gary Tavetian
Rob Thomson
Tanya Trujillo
Kimverlyn Velasquez
Donnell Wilcox

Jerry Zimmerman

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fisher announced the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Chairman Fisher asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to address the Board on items on the agenda or matters related to the Board. Hearing none, Chairman Fisher moved to the next agenda item.

ADMINISTRATION

Consideration and Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Fisher asked for a motion to approve the August 11, 2016 meeting minutes. Mr. Peterson moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Ms. Jones, and by unanimous support, the August 11, 2016 meeting minutes were approved.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN WATER REPORTS

Review and Consideration of Lower Colorado River Water Supply Project Applications

Ms. Trujillo reported that Colorado River Board technical staff had reviewed three applications for Lower Colorado River Water Supply Project water and had found that they meet the necessary criteria. Mr. Kuiper moved that the resolution recommending that the Bureau of Reclamation subcontract with these water users through the City of Needles be approved, with a second by Mr. Brady. By unanimous support, the resolution was approved.

Ms. Trujillo noted that Chris Harris had provided a report to the Board in June on the background of the Water Supply Project. Additionally, Ms. Trujillo noted that the day of the Board meeting marked 15 years since 1,000 letters were sent out notifying parties that they would need to apply for Water Supply Project water for their existing or future uses.

Colorado River Basin Water Report and State and Local Water Reports

Ms. Trujillo reported that as of September 6, Basin storage was at 51% of capacity, similar to storage levels in September of the previous year. Lake Mead was at 37% of capacity, while storage at Lake Powell was 54% of capacity. Ms. Trujillo noted that the water year was drawing to a close, with annual precipitation at 96% of average and inflows to Lake Powell at 89% of average. Ms. Trujillo reported that conditions were dry throughout the Basin in July, although the Lower Basin saw some monsoonal precipitation in August. In the Lower Basin,

Brock Reservoir has been able to save 108,000 acre-feet of water as of the beginning of September, and Senator Wash has been able to regulate about 50,000 acre-feet, through decreased excess flows to Mexico which so far this year are 2,500 acre-feet. This time last year, excess flows to Mexico were 13,000 acre-feet.

Ms. Trujillo reported that the third consultation meeting for the Annual Operating Plan was held in early September. The Plan incorporates the results of the August 24-Month Study, which indicates that the Lower Basin will not be in shortage conditions in 2017. Upper Basin releases will be at least 8.23 maf, with the possibility of a mid-year adjustment to 9.0 maf. There is predicted to be a 48% chance of shortage in 2018, with the likelihood increasing to 60% in subsequent years.

Ms. Trujillo noted that Mark Stuart, director of the Los Angeles region of the Department of Water Resources, had recently retired and the new director was coming on board soon. Board Member Jones noted that the precipitation season was over and no new water was entering reservoirs in the state. Ms. Jones noted that the San Luis reservoir reached its record low point, creating problems for Federal contractors. Ms. Jones also noted that the coming year has the potential to be a La Niña year, which has some correlation with a drier winter in Southern California. However, the exact relationship between La Niña and statewide precipitation is not very clear.

Board Member Peterson noted that the level of Diamond Valley Lake continues to rise. Mr. Peterson also noted that the level of Lake Castaic is also rising and is at about 75% of capacity, representing a significant increase since September last year. Mr. Peterson reported that water conservation continues, even though State water use restrictions have loosened.

Board Member Brady reported that conservation in the San Diego area has averaged 21% over the last 15 months. Mr. Brady reported that, although the volume of conservation has dropped in the past few months, significant conservation has continued. Mr. Brady noted that all agencies within the San Diego Water Authority had successfully passed the three-year stress test mandated by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Board Member Benson reported that IID was encouraged by the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of the Interior and the State of California on Salton Sea management issues. Mr. Benson hoped that Federal resources will be made available to pursue geothermal development at the Salton Sea. Finally, Mr. Benson reported that the current underrun in IID is approximately 120,000 acre-feet.

Mr. Ned Hyduke reported that PVID was working on several projects, including replacing the gates at the Palo Verde Diversion Dam. Mr. Hyduke estimated that the project would be completed in mid-January 2017. Mr. Hyduke also noted that a meeting would be held in Blythe to evaluate the water use by the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program.

Ms. Trujillo noted that all three of the Lower Basin states were currently using less water than in previous years, and that the Lower Basin is on track to use less than its full allocation. This reduction would be due to conservation programs in place in all three states. Chairman Fisher noted that historically low farm prices may also be contributing to lower water use.

COLORADO RIVER BASIN PROGRAM REPORTS

Basin States Drought Contingency Planning

Ms. Trujillo reported that the Drought Contingency Plan negotiations between California, Arizona, Nevada, and the Bureau of Reclamation are ongoing. The goal of the plan is to keep the elevation of Lake Mead from dropping below 1,020 feet in elevation. In addition, California is interested in increasing flexibility for operations during shortage years. The group has a goal of reaching a resolution by the end of the calendar year so that an agreement can be finalized before the change in the federal administration.

Salinity Control Forum

Ms. Trujillo reported that the Salinity Control Forum is working on its triennial review, which describes the benefits of the program and the projected program goals for the next three years. Ms. Trujillo reported that the next meeting of the forum would be held in Moab, Utah, in late October. The meeting will include a tour of the Paradox well in commemoration of its 20th year of operation. Ms. Trujillo noted that, through the lifetime of the Salinity Control Program, an estimated 1.3 million tons of salt have been removed from the system.

Implementation of Minute 319 and Negotiation of Minute 32X

Ms. Trujillo noted that we are now in the fourth year of the five-year term of Minute 319. Negotiations are still underway on Minute 32X, and the new minute will build on the Minute 319 elements, with no major modifications expected. The negotiating group is targeting the extension of the Minute so that it runs parallel to the 2007 Guidelines, which expire in 2026. One goal of the new Minute is for both countries to share in shortages and surplus, including Mexican participation in the drought contingency efforts being developed by the Lower Basin states.

Ms. Trujillo reported that Secretary Jewell, Deputy Secretary Connor, and Reclamation Commissioner Lopez met with the Ambassador from Mexico in early September to discuss the negotiations and the short timeframe remaining to reach an agreement. Ms. Trujillo noted that the bi-national negotiation group would be meeting in mid-September, at which point the feasibility of completing an agreement before the change in administration would become more clear.

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group

Board staff Neuwerth reported that the Adaptive Management Work Group had met August 24-25 in Flagstaff, Arizona. The group approved a work plan, hydrograph, and budget for FY17. Researchers reported that there was currently inadequate sediment to carry out a high flow experiment (HFE), but monitoring of sediment would continue. Ms. Neuwerth noted that a population of invasive green sunfish, which had prevented an HFE in 2015, had returned to a backwater area below the dam and could prevent an HFE from being carried out, even if sediment is available.

Ms. Neuwerth noted that the population of endangered humpback chub near the Little Colorado River is suspected to have skipped spawning for the second year in a row. Surveys of adult fish have indicated a stable population, but surveys of juveniles have been more mixed. Additionally, Ms. Neuwerth noted that the population of nonnative brown trout below Glen Canyon Dam has increased dramatically in recent years and could pose a threat to native fish populations.

Ms. Neuwerth noted that the Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan EIS is nearing completion, with a final EIS expected within a month and a Record of Decision and Biological Opinion expected in November or December. Finally, Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Technical Work Group plans to meet on October 18-19 in Phoenix, AZ.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the LCR MSCP Work Group would meet on September 29, and the Steering Committee would meet on October 26 in Las Vegas, NV. The group will discuss whether the northern Mexican gartersnake, which was recently declared threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, should be added to the program as a covered species. Ms. Neuwerth noted that a gartersnake has been found at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge and a population is known to exist at the recently acquired Planet Ranch property.

Ms. Neuwerth reported that the Colorado River Board sent letters with an adjusted payment calculation to Californian contributors to the LCR MSCP who have seen their share of Hoover Power adjusted due to the recent updates to the Hoover Power contracts.

Announcements

Ms. Trujillo acknowledged and thanked Metropolitan Water District staff, and especially Tom Ryan, for organizing the morning's tour and hosting the meeting.

Ms. Trujillo noted that a MOU between the State of California and Department of Interior had been signed in late August, and that President Obama mentioned Salton Sea restoration during remarks made at the Lake Tahoe summit. The MOU commits \$30 million in Federal funding over the next ten years. An additional \$10 million in contributions from NGOs was also committed to Salton Sea activities.

Ms. Trujillo reported that Congress was likely to pass a continuing resolution to fund the government through early December. The Water Resources Development Act was also being considered on the Senate floor. The Act includes provisions addressing several California water needs.

Ms. Trujillo reported that the international Boundary and Water Commission would be holding a Citizens' Forum at IID's El Centro office on September 28 to discuss water quality on the New River. Ms. Trujillo noted that she had been appointed a member of the Citizens' Forum.

Ms. Trujillo also reported that the steering committee of Basin States representatives working on a traveling museum exhibit regarding the Colorado River would be meeting in Chicago in early October.

Ms. Trujillo made a request for Board agencies to provide photographs or videos to incorporate into presentations for the annual Colorado River Water Users Association meeting in December. Ms. Trujillo noted that the Colorado River Board meeting usually held in conjunction with the CRWUA meeting would be scheduled earlier than usual so as not to conflict with the conference. Mr. Benson inquired if the presentations given at CRWUA this year would feature a California-centric message.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to be brought before the Board, Chairman Fisher adjourned the meeting at 12:14 P.M.