



Colorado River Resources

- **Colorado River Management Report**

Summary

This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for June 2024.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Salinity Forum Meetings

Metropolitan staff chaired meetings of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) and Forum Technical Work Group in Durango, Colorado. Key meeting topics included (1) a report on progress toward passage of the Colorado River Salinity Control Fix Act (see item below); (2) a report that ongoing two-thirds-capacity operation of the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU), a deep injection well used to dispose of salt in the Paradox Valley, has begun to yield local earthquakes near magnitude 2.5, the level at which humans can feel them, suggesting new urgency to find a long-term alternative to the PVU; (3) preparations for the 2026 "Triennial Review," in which the Forum communicates to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency an assessment of the sufficiency of existing water quality criteria for salinity on the Lower Colorado River; and (4) updates from key federal agencies involved in the Colorado River Salinity Control Program (Program), including the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

H.R. 7872 - Colorado River Salinity Control Fix Act

Congress is considering a bill that would reduce the state cost-share for Salinity Control projects in the Colorado River Basin. This bill would be a first step toward correcting a long-standing funding deficit that has constrained congressional appropriations for the Program. In California, Metropolitan generates most of the state cost-share funding for the Program by way of an assessment on power sales from Hoover Dam. After a public hearing, the House Committee on Natural Resources ordered the bill out by unanimous consent. An identical bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry as part of the 2024 Farm Bill package.

H.R. 7776 – Help Hoover Dam Act

The annual costs of operating and maintaining Hoover Dam and Powerplant are paid by revenues generated from the sale of hydropower generated at the facilities. The powerplant is operated by the Bureau of Reclamation and the power is sold through the Western Area Power Administration. A dispute between these agencies resulted in power rates covering the cost of federal employee benefits that were being paid through other appropriations. The funds paid by Hoover power contractors to cover these costs have been accumulating in a Treasury account with no authorization that they be expended. This bill provides that express authorization, and specifically allows the use of the funds to be spent on operations, maintenance, and cleanup actions at the dam. The spending authorization provides two benefits to Metropolitan: first, as the largest contractor for Hoover power, Metropolitan will benefit from these funds offsetting operating costs; and second, the use of the funds for cleanup

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actions on a potentially hazardous disposal site at the dam will protect the quality of Metropolitan's Colorado River water supply. On June 12, the bill was reported out of the House Natural Resources Committee by unanimous consent. A companion bill, SB 4016, is pending in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Upper Colorado River Division States Letter to Reclamation Commissioner

The Governors' representatives of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming sent a letter (June 11 letter) to Commissioner Touton regarding assumptions that the Reclamation would make in the No Action Alternative for the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines Environmental Impact Statement (Post 2026 EIS). The National Environmental Policy Act requires agencies to analyze a no action alternative in their environmental analyses of any new proposed agency actions. Reclamation has indicated that its intent in the Post-2026 EIS is to have the No Action Alternative truly reflect no action, meaning that the current agreements and actions like Treaty Minute 323 and the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan would not be included in the No Action Alternative. The Upper and Lower Division Colorado River Basin States have different views on what should and should not be included in the No Action Alternative assumptions. In the June 11 letter, the Upper Division States took issue with Reclamation's assumptions regarding fixed annual releases of 8.23 million acre-feet of water from Lake Powell. The June 11 letter states that Reclamation's No Action Alternative fails to consider the Upper Basin storage requirements identified in section 602(a) of the Colorado River Basin Project in making release determinations from Lake Powell. Representatives of the Lower Division States are evaluating responses to the June 11 letter.