



- **Board of Directors**  
***One Water and Adaptation Committee***

3/11/2025 Board Meeting

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7-7

## Subject

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Authorize the General Manager to forbear water conserved by two Coachella Valley Water District projects, thus allowing the conserved water to be added to Lake Mead under the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program; the General Manager has determined the proposed action is exempt or otherwise not subject to CEQA

## Executive Summary

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Staff seeks authorization for the General Manager to forbear water conserved by two Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) projects, thus allowing the conserved water to be added to Lake Mead pursuant to funding provided by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program (LC Conservation Program). Staff specifically seeks authorization to forbear the following actions: (1) CVWD reducing groundwater replenishment by up to 35,000 acre-feet in 2026, and (2) up to 33,600 acre-feet related to the upgrade and construction of tertiary treatment facilities at the CVWD Water Reclamation Plant No. 4.

## Proposed Action(s)/Recommendation(s) and Options

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### Staff Recommendation: Option #1

#### Option #1

Authorize the General Manager to forbear water conserved by two Coachella Valley Water District projects, thus allowing the conserved water to be added to Lake Mead under the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program.

**Fiscal Impact:** None

**Business Analysis:** The agreement would forbear additional system conservation to augment Colorado River supplies at no additional cost to Metropolitan.

#### Option #2

Do not enter into the forbearance agreement under the proposed terms.

**Fiscal Impact:** None

**Business Analysis:** Metropolitan would forego an opportunity to augment Colorado River water supplies to reduce the risk of future curtailment.

## Alternatives Considered

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No alternatives were considered.

## **Applicable Policy**

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Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11104: Delegation of Responsibilities

By Minute Item 53051 in December 2022, Metropolitan's Board adopted legislative priorities and principles to support the funding of conservation projects to enhance the resiliency of the Colorado River System to reduce the risk of Lake Mead and Lake Powell falling below critical elevations.

## **Related Board Action(s)/Future Action(s)**

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By Minute Item 53447 in November 2023, Metropolitan's Board approved a similar action for system conservation created by CVWD and IID in 2023 to be left in Lake Mead as system water under Reclamation's LC Conservation Program.

By Minute Item 53752 in August 2024, Metropolitan's Board approved forbearance for system conservation created by CVWD and IID between 2024-2026 to be left in Lake Mead as system water under Reclamation's LC Conservation Program.

## **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

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### **CEQA determination for Option #1:**

The proposed action is not defined as a project under CEQA because it will not result in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(a)).

### **CEQA determination for Option #2:**

None required

## **Details and Background**

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### **Background**

Metropolitan often collaborates with other agencies to provide system water to Lake Mead. Most recently, Metropolitan has been collaborating with other agencies on a variety of projects under Reclamation's LC Conservation Program. Under these collaborative efforts, two California forbearance agreements have been signed. The first is the December 11, 2023, California Forbearance Agreement which covered LC Conservation Program activities in California in calendar year 2023. The second is the November 13, 2024, California Forbearance Agreement which covered LC Conservation Program activities within California, that existed at the time of the agreement, between calendar years 2024 and 2026.

### **California Forbearance Agreement for LC Conservation Program Agreements**

Since the November 13, 2024, California Forbearance Agreement was signed, CVWD developed two new conservation agreements under the LC Conservation Program. One of these agreements is under Bucket 1 of the LC Conservation Program, while the other is under Bucket 2. In order for water conserved under these agreements to be left in Lake Mead, Metropolitan must forbear water generated from both agreements.

First, forbearance is needed for water conserved pursuant to an amendment of an existing agreement between Reclamation and CVWD to fund a reduction in groundwater replenishment by up to 35,000 acre-feet per year at \$400 per acre-foot. The existing system conservation agreement covers 2023-2025. This amendment would extend the system conservation agreement to cover 2026 under the same volume and price terms.

Second, forbearance is needed for water conserved pursuant to an agreement between Reclamation and CVWD to upgrade Water Reclamation Plant No. 4 so that it can provide tertiary treated water for reuse within CVWD. Under this agreement, CVWD would upgrade/construct tertiary treatment facilities at the Water Reclamation Plant No. 4, thereby reducing its long-term demand for Colorado River water. CVWD expects that the tertiary treatment facilities will begin saving water in 2029. CVWD will use that savings to create system conservation water in Lake Mead at a rate of 1,120 acre-feet per year for 30 years, for a total of 33,600 acre-feet. CVWD would

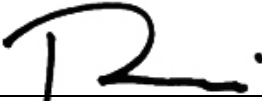
also have the option to pre-deliver conserved water to Lake Mead through another accepted conservation effort, such as replenishment curtailment.

Forbearance is necessary for these actions because, under the California priority system, Colorado River water conserved by a higher-priority user is available to the next lower-priority user. For additional background on the purpose and mechanics of a forbearance by Metropolitan, please see the June 2024 presentation on that subject, available at:

<https://mwdh2o.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13012478&GUID=5C7533D3-F668-4FC6-A12E-EACEF0DF52DD>.

**Benefits**

With the forbearance of these two additional conservation programs, up to 68,600 AF of water will be added to Lake Mead. Metropolitan and other Colorado River water users benefit from increased Lake Mead elevation, power generation, and reliability of Colorado River water supplies.

  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2/24/2025  
*Brandon J. Goshi* Date  
*Interim Manager,*  
*Water Resource Management*

  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2/24/2025  
*Deven N. Upadhyay* Date  
*General Manager*

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