



● 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 June 2023.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Notice of Intent to Prepare Post-2026 Operational Guidelines

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) published the Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Notice to Solicit Comments and Hold Public Scoping Meetings on the Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Reclamation is seeking comments on the purpose and need of the EIS, and scope of the analysis. The NOI notes that as the 2007 operational guidelines are interim, it is likely that the post-2026 operational guidelines will be interim, but that Reclamation intends that the post-2026 operational guidelines and strategies be robust and adaptive enough to withstand a broad range of future conditions and provide greater operational and planning stability to water users and the public. Reclamation requests that the public submit comments concerning the scope of specific operational guidelines, strategies, and any other issues that should be considered on or before August 15, 2023. Metropolitan staff will be preparing comments to submit before the deadline.

Reclamation intends to develop approaches for outreach throughout this National Environmental Planning Act process that facilitate inclusion at multiple levels. This outreach will include individualized consultation, outreach to existing groups and forums, creation of new groups and forums, as well as broader public outreach. Tribal engagement and inclusivity will be emphasized through this process. Reclamation is also committed to identifying processes that can complement the International Boundary and Water Commission's efforts to develop agreements that will succeed Treaty Minute 323, which expires in 2026.

June Salinity Control Forum Meeting

Metropolitan Staff attended a meeting of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum) in Jackson, Wyoming, June 6-7, 2023. The meeting featured discussion of proposed language for the 2023 federal Farm Bill to reduce state cost-share requirements for salinity control funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's EQIP Program (from 30 percent to 15 percent) and for operation and maintenance costs on three projects implemented as part of the original 1974 Salinity Control Act: the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU; from 25 percent to 10 percent), the Grand Valley Project (from 25 percent to 0 percent), and the McElmo Project (from 30 percent to 0 percent). These reductions in state cost-share requirements would be a major first step toward rectifying a funding deficit that has challenged the Salinity Control Program in the recent past. Metropolitan staff has worked with congressional staff to develop proposed legislation to implement this change in the cost share amounts.

Additionally, Reclamation updated the Forum on their Request for Information from private industry to solicit new alternatives for the long-term replacement of the PVU. The Paradox well continues to operate at 2/3 capacity, but the length of time it can continue to operate is uncertain. Finally, Forum Work Group members presented to the Forum the draft 2023 "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. The draft Triennial Review recommended no changes to existing salinity criteria. Forum members will review and comment on the draft prior to their fall meeting in October 2023.

Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

Reclamation Begins 2023 Annual Operating Plan Consultation

Reclamation held the first of three annual consultation meetings regarding its Annual Operating Plan for Colorado River Reservoirs (AOP) for 2024. Each year Reclamation prepares an AOP that reports on operations of Colorado River Reservoirs during the past year, and projects operations and releases for the current year based on current and projected reservoir elevations and hydrologic conditions throughout the basin. The AOP provides Metropolitan with significant operational information regarding projected releases from Lake Powell to Lake Mead and whether the Lower Division States (California, Arizona, and Nevada) will be at normal, surplus, or shortage conditions. Metropolitan uses information in the AOP to plan diversions, ICS creation and/or delivery, interstate banking determinations, and Drought Contingency Plan Contributions. In most years the AOP is finalized in September, but the 2024 AOP is expected to be finalized in October 2023 due to the anticipated schedule of the 2007 Interim Guidelines Supplemental EIS. The final determination for 2024 will be made in August 2023, but at this point it appears a tier 1 shortage will likely be declared for next year. This determination would not affect Metropolitan's operations.