



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Report

Office of the General Manager

• Colorado River Management Report

Summary

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

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines Environmental Impact Statement

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) initiated the process to developing Post-2026 Operational Guidelines for the Colorado River system reservoirs in June of last year. Reclamation has issued the report on the purpose, need, and scope of the proposed federal action. Since that time, the Colorado River Basin States have been working toward development of an alternative that would be submitted to Reclamation to be analyzed as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines. General Manager Adel Hagekahlil and other Metropolitan staff have been participating in various aspects of that effort. The alternative will include new provisions for water reductions to the Colorado River Basin States. Reclamation will evaluate the alternatives with several different possible future water supply conditions, including conditions that are much drier than has been experienced in recent years. These drier hydrologies will include the potential for up to 4 million acre-feet of water reductions in certain years. It is hoped that all seven states will support a single alternative, but at this point there continues to be a divide between the Upper and Lower Basin States regarding shortages and Lake Powell operations. It is possible that each Basin State will submit their own proposal to Reclamation by the March 2024 deadline.

As part of this effort, Metropolitan has been meeting with agencies in California to discuss how reductions in California might be shared among the section 5 contractors. The alternative that will be submitted in March 2024 will not include reductions to individual water agencies, but rather water reductions to each state. The various states will have time between March and the end of 2024 to determine how each state will share reductions and other parameters, such as storage in Lake Mead. Metropolitan staff will provide a report to the Board on the details of the proposal once it is submitted to Reclamation in March 2024. After the proposal is submitted, Reclamation will begin analyzing the alternatives and anticipates issuing a draft EIS in December 2024. There is no schedule of actions beyond December 2024, but the next steps would be to prepare a Final EIS and Record of Decision in time for the development of the 2027 Colorado River Annual Operation Plan. Congressional legislation may be needed to implement the Record of Decision.