



● 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 February 2022

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Colorado River Basin Conditions

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) 24-Month Study forecast for runoff into the Colorado River system has declined more than 1 million acre-feet (maf) between January and February 2022. Current runoff projections into Lake Powell for April through July of unregulated inflow forecast is 5.000 maf or 78 percent of average. The reduced runoff forecast has increased the chance of Lake Powell declining to power pool (elevation 3,490 feet) to around 25 percent each year through 2026. Current projections show the chances of Lake Mead declining to critically low elevations have improved because of an adjustment to a model that Reclamation made to more accurately account for intervening inflows between Lake Powell and Lake Mead. However, the risk of Lake Mead declining to elevation 1,020 feet is 20 percent in 2024 and increases to 37 percent in 2026. The increased risk of reaching critical elevations highlight the need to fully implement the 500+ plan agreement to add 1 maf of additional conserved water to Lake Mead by the end of next year. Staff continues to explore new programs that could conserve water in the short-term and will keep the Board apprized of those activities.

Treaty Minute 323 Implementation Update

On September 21, 2017, the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission signed Minute No. 323, titled "Extension of Cooperative Measures and Adoption of a Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan in the Colorado River Basin". Following Minute No. 323's adoption, a number of workgroups were established to implement the provisions of the minute. Metropolitan staff regularly participate in many of the workgroups, including the Projects' workgroup, which was established to seek "opportunities for joint cooperative projects with the potential for increasing delivery or exchange of Colorado River water benefitting both nations". In February, staff participated in the Minute 323 Projects Workgroup meeting. The Workgroup reviewed Conagua's progress on efficiency programs including replacement of existing gate structures on the main canals in the system, as well as SCADA controls for better management of water deliveries. Additionally, the Workgroup discussed a New Water Projects Study, which has been finalized by Conagua and is seeking funding to move forward. The Workgroup recommended Mexico conduct a pilot project using a new drip irrigation system in the Mexicali area with additional technical and financial support from the U.S. Lastly, the workgroup heard a presentation by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are working with the Mexicali area farmers to invest in water conservation projects to develop conserved water that could be purchased for environmental purposes. Some water has already been conserved and used for the environment and the NGOs would like to expand that effort as part of the Minute 323 Projects.