



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Report

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 March 21 – April 14, 2025.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Bard Seasonal Fallowing Program

The System Conservation Implementation Agreement funding amendment was executed on April 10, and it authorized the Bard Seasonal Fallowing program to proceed with up to 6,000 fallowed acres. The 2025 fallowing season started on April 1 and will end on July 31, 2025. This season, there are seven farmers participating in the program, with approximately 4,900 acres fallowed. This would yield approximately 9,300 acre-feet of Colorado River water savings, and Metropolitan will invoice Reclamation for \$3.7 million. During the first week of April, staff conducted inspections at all participating sites to ensure compliance with program requirements. A second inspection is planned for the end of July 2025 to verify continued compliance with the fallowing requirements.

Metropolitan's Support for Community Investment Programs in the Palo Verde Valley

In November 2024, Metropolitan received \$93.6 million from the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) for water conserved through the Palo Verde Irrigation District (PVID) Fallowing Program in Years 1 and 2 of the System Conservation Implementation Agreement (SCIA). Of that amount, a total of \$5.2 million is earmarked for community investment in PVID's service area. Metropolitan and PVID agreed to equally split the community funds with each agency storing the funds in separate interest-bearing accounts. As community projects are awarded, Metropolitan and PVID will equally share in the disbursement of funds towards community investment projects, as well as any related administrative costs. After Metropolitan's board authorized the agreement between Metropolitan and PVID outlining the management of community funds in February 2025, Metropolitan was able to send PVID its share of the funds, plus interest. On April 1, Metropolitan wired PVID a payment of \$2.6 million, which included \$33,093 of interest accrued since Metropolitan received the funds from USBR. Currently, Metropolitan and PVID are finalizing membership in an advisory committee that will assist in the review of funding applications. Additionally, PVID and Metropolitan will host a kick-off event on May 21 at the Blythe Chamber of Commerce to advertise the funding program to the community. Metropolitan will receive a final payment from USBR for Year 3 of the SCIA in Fall 2025, which will include an additional \$2.6 million designated for the community funding program.

Reduction in Staff for Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) provides compliance with the Endangered Species Act for water and power operations in the Lower Colorado River Basin. The 50-year program is funded by equal contributions from the federal government and non-federal water and power contractors. Now in its 20th year, the program has created over 7,000 acres of habitat and stocked thousands of

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native fish in the river. USBR manages the program with oversight from a Steering Committee comprised of the permittees and other stakeholders.

In accordance with recent efforts to reduce the federal workforce, USBR has offered early retirement and buyout packages to its employees. USBR announced that nine members of the LCR MSCP staff have accepted the offer, comprising approximately one-quarter of the total staff. The employees that have left federal service include the program manager, Terry Murphy. A freeze on federal hiring will preclude the replacement of staff members in the near term, which will affect some species monitoring and other work.

Terry Murphy requested that Metropolitan assist the LCR MSCP with the management of the farm leases on recently acquired land within PVID. The land will ultimately be used for new aquatic habitat but remains under cultivation while planning is ongoing. Metropolitan's Land Management staff will continue discussions with USBR on terms for providing these services.