



## ● Colorado River Management Report

### Summary

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This report provides a summary of activities related to management of Metropolitan's Colorado River resources for the month of December 2021.

### Purpose

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Informational

### Detailed Report

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#### 500+ Plan Memorandum of Understanding

Following the Metropolitan Board's approval of participation in the 500+ Plan at the December 14 Board meeting, representatives of the United States, Arizona, Central Arizona Water Conservation District, Nevada, Southern Nevada Water Authority, and Metropolitan signed the 500+ Plan memorandum of understanding (MOU) at a signing ceremony on December 15. The 500+ Plan MOU commits the parties to the goal of adding or retaining at least 500,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead in 2022 and 2023. In the MOU, the non-federal parties commit to collectively contributing \$100 million, with a federal commitment to work to match the non-federal funding in the amount of \$100 million. The parties to the 500+ Plan MOU anticipate developing funding and implementation agreements starting in early 2022.

On December 20, the Bureau of Reclamation released the spending plan for the \$210 million provided in the Extending Government Funding and Delivery Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 117-43), including \$40 million for the implementation of the 500+ Plan. Of the \$40 million allocated, \$26 million will go to the Lower Colorado River Operations Program to continue the implementation of Drought Contingency Plan activities, and \$14 million to shore up water firming rights for Tribal communities during times of shortage in the Central Arizona water supply. With the funding for the plan secured, Metropolitan staff has been in discussions with agricultural districts in California to explore additional conservation actions that could help meet the goals of the 500+ Plan.

#### Quechan Seasonal Fallowing Agreement

Following Metropolitan's Board authorization in November, on December 15 representatives from Metropolitan and the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe (Quechan Tribe) signed an agreement in which Metropolitan will pay the Quechan Tribe to seasonally fallow a portion of their currently irrigated lands from April through July of 2022 and 2023. The conserved water will be made available to Metropolitan and reduce its need to take Intentionally Create Surplus out of Lake Mead to fill the Colorado River Aqueduct in dry years. During implementation of the two-year pilot fallowing program, Metropolitan and the Quechan tribe will evaluate the program and consider a longer-term program beginning in 2024. The seasonal fallowing program builds on an existing forbearance program between the agencies in which Metropolitan incentivizes the Quechan Tribe to not increase its water use that it has a legal right to use.

#### Colorado River Water Users Association Annual Conference

After a one-year hiatus, the Colorado River Water Users Association held its annual conference in Las Vegas during December 14-16. Most of the speakers at the conference highlighted ongoing dry conditions facing the Colorado River Basin, recognizing the need for increased conservation to protect Lake Powell and Lake Mead. It was noted that there is a chance that Lake Powell could fall below its ability to generate power in 2022. The 500+ plan to protect Lake Mead was signed at the conference, but it was recognized that this is only a first step

## Board Report (Colorado River Management Report)

developing a longer-term sustainability plan for the Colorado River. Metropolitan General Manager Adel Hagekhalil spoke to the conference attendees acknowledging that all agencies need to work together to protect the Colorado River and that no one can be left out of the solution.