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 July 2026.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Develop Post-2026 Guidelines and Negotiate Implementation Agreements

During July, Metropolitan continued to prepare for issuance of the federal decision documents governing near-term operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead and for the implementation work that will follow.

The Department of the Interior (Interior) released the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead on July 31. The Record of Decision and the 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines are expected soon. The Record of Decision is expected to establish a 10-Year Framework of principles and operational sideboards defining the range of actions that may be selected through successive two-year operating guidelines, beginning with the 2027–2028 Operating Guidelines.

The 2027–2028 Operating Guidelines are expected to require a final Lower Basin implementation agreement for Lake Mead operations. Those operations are expected to include 1.25 million acre-feet (AF) of annual Lower Basin reductions and an allocation of 3.96 million AF for delivery to California, reflecting the Colorado River Board of California's agreement to a 440,000 AF annual reduction in 2027 and 2028.

The operations of Lake Mead in the 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines are expected to be contingent on the adoption of a Lower Basin implementation agreement that defines the Lower Basin states' obligations to make 1.25 million AF of annual reductions, includes provisions for storage, evaporation charges, and delivery of Intentionally Created Surplus, and other matters. Once the federal documents are issued, Metropolitan will participate directly in negotiating the Lower Basin implementation agreement. In the federal process, Interior negotiated primarily with the seven Basin State principals, while water-user representatives, including Metropolitan staff, participated in only portions of the process. By contrast, the Lower Basin implementation agreement will be executed by the Lower Basin States and Colorado River contractors, requiring Metropolitan's direct involvement in its development.

California contractors will also negotiate an intra-California agreement allocating responsibility for the 440,000 AF annual reduction. Metropolitan will be central in developing the agreement that will establish the California contractors' obligations to meet the 440,000 AF of reductions in 2027 and 2028.

The Basin States and federal agencies will also shift to development of the 2027 Annual Operating Plan, which will establish the specific operating determinations for the Colorado River system under the new federal framework.

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