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 September 2026.

Purpose

Informational

Detailed Report

Treaty Minute 334

On September 2, the United States and Mexico signed Minute 334 to the 1944 Water Treaty, establishing binational Colorado River cooperative measures through December 31, 2028. The Minute replaces relevant provisions of Minutes 323 and 330 and will expire at the same time as the 2027–2028 Operating Guidelines. In 2027 and 2028, Mexico's annual Colorado River delivery will be reduced by 250,000 acre-feet (AF), or approximately 16.7 percent of its 1.5 million acre-foot Treaty allotment, corresponding to the 1.25 million acre-foot annual reduction applicable to the U.S. Lower Basin.

Minute 334 also establishes procedures for both shortage and higher reservoir conditions. If the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) August 24-Month Study projects Lake Mead at or below elevation 1,000 feet during the subsequent 12 months, the United States and Mexico will consult regarding potential additional reductions in 2028 and the mechanisms for implementing them. Conversely, if Lake Mead is projected to reach elevation 1,125 feet or higher, the Commission will discuss procedures for increasing deliveries to Mexico in proportion to additional water available to the United States. The Minute also continues Mexico's Water Reserve program, allowing Mexico to create up to 250,000 AF of new Water Reserve in each of 2027 and 2028, subject to the storage, assessment, delivery, and operational provisions of the Minute.

The Minute continues other elements of binational cooperation, including environmental habitat maintenance and monitoring, binational workgroups addressing hydrology, flow variability and operations, salinity, and future conservation and augmentation projects. It also establishes a Salinity Pilot Program for 2027 and 2028 to manage the salinity of water delivered to Mexico under reduced delivery conditions and to inform longer-term salinity management.

2027 Lower Basin Shortage Determination

On August 26, 2026, Reclamation formally notified Colorado River water users that a Shortage Condition will exist in the Lower Basin in calendar year 2027. Under the 2027–2028 Operating Guidelines, 6.25 million AF will be available for consumptive use by Arizona, California, and Nevada, a reduction of 1.25 million AF from the Lower Basin's 7.5 million acre-foot basic apportionment. Reclamation identified two options for making those reductions: (1) if there is a Lower Basin agreement, reductions would be 760,000 AF for Arizona, 440,000 AF for California, and 50,000 AF for Nevada; or (2) without an agreement, Reclamation would apply cuts using its existing authority.

Date of Report: 10/13/2026

Reclamation stated that the distribution of these reductions among the three states remains subject to a forthcoming Lower Basin agreement. If the states do not reach agreement, the Secretary of the Interior will determine the quantities and apportionment of reductions under Section 5.3.A.3 of the 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines, following consultation with the Lower Division States. For California, the shortage letter identifies 3.96 million AF as available for consumptive use in 2027, reflecting the proposed 440,000 acre-foot reduction from California's 4.4 million acre-foot basic apportionment.

The letter also acknowledges Nevada's pending litigation challenging the 2026 Record of Decision and the 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines, while stating that Reclamation will continue implementing those documents. Reclamation will continue discussions with the Lower Division States regarding an agreement governing the allocation of the 2027 reductions.