



Authorize the Metropolitan/Quechan Tribe Seasonal Fallowing Pilot Program

Water Planning and Stewardship Committee

Item 7-12

November 8, 2021

Background

Quechan (Kwatsáan) Tribe of the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation

- Located along the Colorado River and within the Reservation
- Parcels irrigated through the All-American Canal, Yuma Main Canal, groundwater wells, or directly from the Colorado River
- Crops grown:
 - Winter: High-value vegetables
 - Spring/Summer: Lower-value, water-intensive grasses



Quechan Water Rights Settlement Agreement

- Settlement reached between Metropolitan and Quechan in 2005
- Metropolitan provides incentives to the Tribe to limit water use from the Colorado River
 - Provides stable supplies to Metropolitan
- Incentivizes Tribe to not develop and divert an additional:
 - 13,000 AF each year from 2006-2034
 - Since inception, Tribe has forborne diversion of nearly all 13,000 AF each year
 - 20,000 AF each year beginning 2035

Metropolitan/Bard Seasonal Fallowing Program

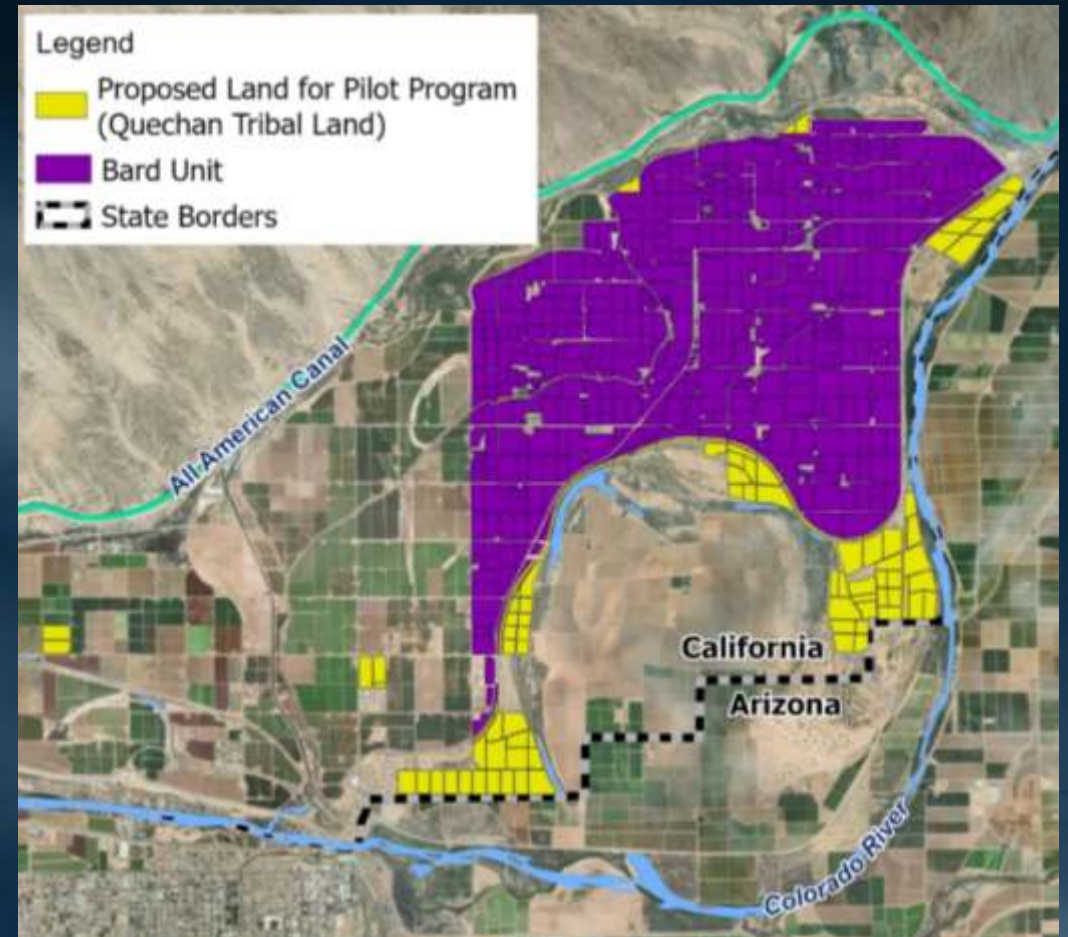
- Authorized by Board in December 2019
- Fallowing occurs April to July, 2020-2026
- Max enrollment of 3,000 irrigable acres each year
- Completed fallowing seasons:
 - 2020: 2,750 acres
 - Est. water savings: 6,075 acre-feet
 - 2021: 2,940 acres
 - Est. water savings: 6,490 acre-feet
- Metropolitan payments
 - \$1.4 million, escalated annually
 - Avg. water cost: \$207/AF



Proposed Metropolitan/Quechan Tribe Seasonal Following Pilot Program

Purpose of Pilot Program

- Evaluate the water savings of fallowing within the Tribal land
- Evaluate water available to Metropolitan from fallowing
- Determine farmer interest
 - Voluntary participation
- Explore the possibility of a long-term seasonal fallowing program with the Tribe



Key Elements of Pilot Program

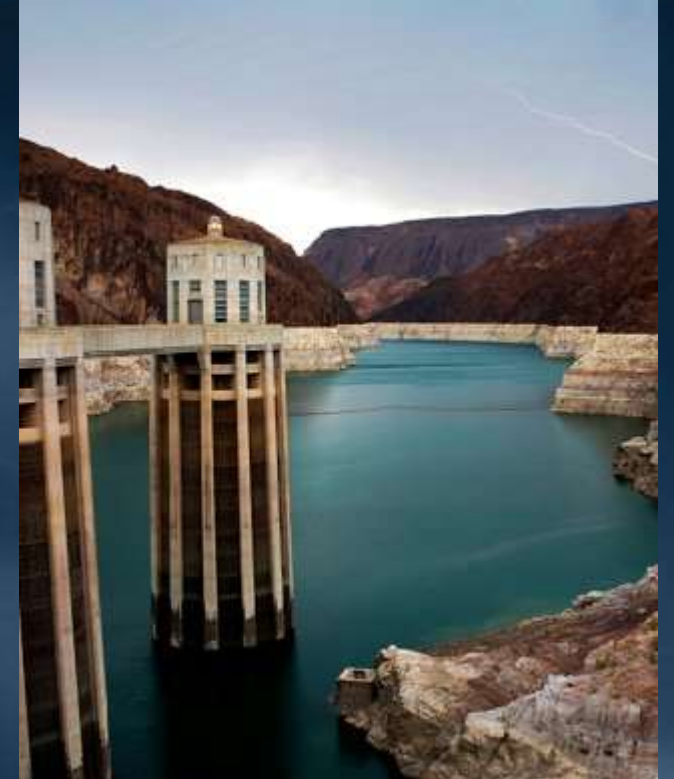
- Two fallowing seasons: April to July, 2022-2023
- Maximum enrollment of 1,600 irrigable acres each fallowing season
- Participation on first-come, first-served basis
- Eligible parcels must have:
 - Recent history of farming or participation in fallowing program
 - Access to a canal, direct-from-river pumping, or groundwater well
- Program agreement with Tribe and fallowing agreements with farmers

Pilot Program Costs

- Approx. \$473 per acre per year of fallowed irrigable land, escalated annually
 - 75% paid to farmer
 - 25% paid to Tribe
- Tribe payment of \$15,000 per year fallowed
 - Direct and indirect costs related to its administration of the Pilot
- Payments made in two installments following verification of fallowing
- Total payment costs for proposed Pilot: \$1.6 million
 - Estimated unit cost: \$226/AF

Pilot Program Benefits

- Expanding partnership between Metropolitan and Tribe
- Metropolitan Water District
 - Est. water savings of 2.21 AF/acre of land fallowed
 - Actual savings determined during pilot
 - Opportunity for long-term program
- Quechan Tribe
 - Payments to farmers and Tribe
 - Payment to Tribe for system improvements
 - Opportunity for long-term program



Board Options

- Option #1

- Authorize the General Manager to enter into a Program agreement with the Quechan Tribe and seasonal fallowing agreements with farmers within the Quechan tribal land. Additionally, approve payment of up to \$1.6 million for the 2022 and 2023 fallowing seasons.

- Option #2

- Do not authorize the General Manager to enter into a Program agreement with the Quechan Tribe and seasonal fallowing agreements with farmers within the Quechan tribal land.

Staff Recommendations

- Option #1

