

Interbasin Compact Committee
Southwest Basins Roundtable
Colorado River Subcommittee Meeting-DRAFT
Hybrid from Dolores Water Conservation District
Cortez, Colorado
July 26, 2023

Members Present:

Ken Curtis	DWCD
Steve Harris	HWE
Peter Ortega	UMUT
Bruce Whitehead	ALPWCD
Al Pfister	SJWCD
Ed Tolen	At-Large Local Domestic Rep
Dave Kanzer	Colorado River District

Public: Shannon Mullane (Colorado Sun), Wendy Weygandt (Recorder), Mike Preston (UMUT), Latisha Yazzie (UMUT), Monika Rock (SWCD), Perry Cabot (Colorado State University), Michelle Garrison (CWCB), Amy Ostdiek (CWCB), Jeff Meyer (YWG), Ken Brenner (YWG)

Introductions

Subcommittee chair Ken Curtis, called the Colorado River Subcommittee meeting to order at 12:40 p.m. due to technical issues with the internet.

Colorado River Conditions Update- Amy Ostdiek & Michelle Garrison, CWCB

Michelle Garrison

- Climate forecast in August predicts above average temperatures and below average precipitation.
- Storage conditions:
 - Flaming Gorge 91% full
 - Fontenelle 92% full
 - Marrow Point 94% full
 - Navajo 77% full
 - Lake Powell 41% full
 - Blue Mesa 90% full

CWCB Updates on CR Issues: Amy Ostdiek

- Drought Response Operations Updates
 - 2023 Drought Response Operation Agreement Plan was adopted on May 17 with a focus on recovery
 - The Bureau of Reclamation estimates that 558,000 AF to be **recovered** at Flaming Gorge
 - 36,000 AF of water was **released** from Blue Mesa
 - 624,000 AF of water was released from Flaming Gorge and Blue Mesa as of July 26.
- System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP)

- 65 projects are on track for implementation; (24 of them in Colorado)
- Final implementation will be posted on the CWCB website
- Next Steps:
 - Verification and analysis of conserved consumptive use -CCU
 - Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) is compiling lessons learned
 - Consideration of potential 2023-2024 program
- SCPP was a four year pilot program designed to explore solutions that would address water shortages in Lake Powell and Lake Mead and the Upper Colorado River Basin
 - Lessons Learned:
 - Clear communication is important
 - Promote clarity about roles and responsibilities
 - Increase understanding of resources required
- Draft Supplement of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
 - Process Updates:
 - January 2023: Six states provide consensus-based modeling approach calling for cuts to the Lower Division States–California is not included.
 - April 2023: The Bureau of Reclamation releases the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) calling for cuts from the Lower Division states.
 - May 22: The Lower Division states provide a proposal to conserve 3 million acre feet and the Upper Basin requested more information. (Note: this is not an agreement)
 - Forthcoming: The revised draft of the SEIS will be analyzed within the Lower Basin proposal.
- Notice of Intent for Post-2026 Operation
 - In June 2023, the Department of the Interior announced that it is initiating the formal process to develop the future Lake Powell and Lake Mead operating guidelines that will replace the 2007 Guidelines. The “Post 2026 Operation” comments on Post 2026 Notice of Intention?NOI are due August 15.
- Colorado Priorities
 - Acknowledging that climate change is real
 - Recognizing that water users in the Lower Basin are not more important than water users in the Upper Basin
 - Prevent overuse in the Lower Basin
 - Defending against attempts at compact curtailment in the Upper Basin States
 - Operating Lake Powell and Lake Mead to respond to actual hydrology and protect shortage.
 - Preserving federal reserved water rights for Tribal Nations.

Risk Study Update - Dave (DK) Kanzer, Colorado River District

- Risk Study Phase IV
 - Key Elements

- Hydrology is the #1 indicator of “health” and catalyst for risk to the Colorado River water users.
- Increase demand in the Upper Basin = An increased risk of potential shortage.
- An increase in Trans-Mountain Diversion (TMP) demands will not be fully satisfied as hydrology worsens, resulting in a drawdown of West Slope TMD storage reservoirs.
- Maintaining Lake Powell elevation of 3500’ (above mean sea level) under existing policy (2007 Interim Guidelines) puts a burden on the Upper Basin.
- Project Objectives
 - Reexamine and Analyze
 - Pre/Post 1922 Compact Consumptive Use estimates in Colorado
 - Big River impacts to Lake Powell and Lake Mead and compact obligations
- Phase III overestimated total consumptive use and pre-compact consumptive uses
- Phase IV intended to fix the state modal to more accurately reflect consumptive use in priority
- The Bureau of Reclamation wants Lake Powell above 3500’ elevation which requires extra water to fulfill current demands.
- Maintaining Lake Powell’s elevation at 3500’ per the existing operational policy puts the burden entirely on the Upper Basin.
- Follow the Colorado River Drought Task Force: SB 295 list of upcoming Task Force Meetings and updates at www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org/DroughtTaskForce
- The Water Conservation Support Tool works towards better outcomes to benefit farmers and ranchers, achieve water reduction targets, and minimize community impacts.

YWG BRT Big River Committee position paper: Jeff Meyer & Ken Brenner

- Overview-Short Term/Drought Relief
 - Support UCRC 5-Point Plan
 - Promote and participate in DCP
 - Avoid “Buy and Dry”; Ensure SCP leases meet constraints
 - Ensure all Upper Basin conserved water stays in Lake Powell (and if it is used that it is for its intended purposes)
 - Operate CRS on forecasted information; not on reservoir elevation.
 - Address structural deficit accounting; make the Lower Basin responsible for a fair proportion of losses.
 - Prioritize projects for drought relief; streamline processes
 - Ensure Lower Basin only uses its fair apportionment; 7.5 MAF in some years; or less if hydrology limits.

- Be consistent with existing US and Colorado River law
- Overview-Post 2026 Operations
 - Plan for a range of hydrology and growth scenarios
 - Allocate climate change risk fairly between Basins
 - Formalize and codify that the Upper Basin-conserved water will stay in Lake Powell
 - Use small, incremental (not Tier-Based) releases; balance with conservation.
 - Formalize and codify accounting for evaporation and **transpiration** losses
- YWG Timeline
 - **YWG Basin Roundtable Committee starts to study 2007 Interim Guidelines**
 - The Bureau of Reclamation demands 60-day plan for 2-4 MAF reductions (June 2022)
 - UCRC submits 5-Point Plan (July 2022)
 - 6 of 7 States reach agreement on the Consensus-Based Modeling Alternative (CBMA) (January 2023)
 - **Then YWG releases Position Paper**
 - The Bureau of Reclamation releases the draft SEIS; 13-28% cuts in the Lower Basin (April 2023)
 - California drives the Lower Basin Agreements for paid cuts of 3 MAF (May 2023)
 - The Bureau of Reclamation rescinds SEIS and considers the Lower Basin alternative plan (June 2023)

Evaluating Conserved Consumptive Use in the Upper Colorado - Perry Cabot

- Task #1: Evaluating Conserved Consumptive Use in the Upper Colorado
- Task #2: Perform remote sensing measurement and estimate consumptive use (CU) and conserved consumptive use (CCU)
- Task #3: Validate multiple remote sensing models for CU and CCU that is scientific based, replicable, and scalable that can be used on high elevation pastures.
- Task #4: Construct water production function for different grasses and crops under varying soil and ground water conditions in order to understand yields.

Wrap Up & Adjournment

Subcommittee chair Ken Curtis adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m.