



DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Colorado River Authority of Utah
February 16, 2023 --1:00 p.m. MT**
World Trade Center 1st Floor Conference Room
60 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

1. Call to Order – Gene Shawcroft, Chair

Mr. Shawcroft called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm and asked each attendee to briefly introduce themselves. Danny Schoenfeld introduced attendees who had joined remotely. A list of attendees is included in Attachment 1.

2. Approval of Minutes of the January 12, 2023, Colorado River Authority of Utah Meeting – Gene Shawcroft

There being no comments on the January 12, 2023 minutes, a motion was made by Mr. Larsen and seconded by Mr. Humphrey to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

3. Public Comment Pursuant to the Public Comment Policy of the Authority (limit of 2 minutes per person) – Gene Shawcroft

There were no public comments.

4. Hydrology Update – Bart Leeflang, P.E., Colorado River Authority of Utah

Mr. Leeflang discussed the current status of the reservoirs stating that on February 14th Lake Powell hit its lowest point since it was first filled at 3521' and stated the total system content was 23%. Mr. Leeflang stated our water year 2023 precipitation to date was 118% and the current basin snowpack was 130%, both of which are good. Mr. Leeflang displayed tea cup diagrams that show Lake Powell and Blue Mesa Reservoirs are very low, and Navajo Reservoir is approximately 50% full. Mr. Leeflang discussed the SNOTEL Current Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) that is well over 150% in many areas in Utah. Mr. Leeflang explained that as of today we're at 131% of median, and 89% median peak. Mr. Leeflang displayed the Lake Powell unregulated inflow for 2023 which showed an increase to 10.5 MAF in February. Mr. Leeflang discussed the Lake Powell and Lake Mead end of month elevations which show the reservoirs are making some upward progress but are still very much in short supply. Mr. Leeflang shared a photo of Lake Mead taken by Executive Director Haas yesterday which shows how low the water level is, and Ms. Haas explained that Lake Mead will hit its all-time low next month.

Mr. Leeflang discussed precipitation forecasts for the next two weeks and pointed out the wet conditions on the coast in California and over Arizona, which he stated are meaningful on the Colorado River. Mr. Leeflang pointed out a hole in southwest Wyoming which he explained represents high pressure and is impacting precipitation for the Green River. Mr. Leeflang discussed the Green River drainage which is drier than the rest of the Uintah Basin and could negatively influence the ability to refill Flaming Gorge.

Mr. Leeflang stated there is an intersection relating to hydrology and operations between the 2023 Lake Powell Operations and the Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA). Mr. Leeflang explained the way Reclamation is planning to operate is based on the April 24-month study where

they will look at the projections of Lake Powell elevation and if projected elevations are above 3525' Reclamation will do balancing releases between Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Mr. Leeftang displayed a chart showing the CBRFC traces resulting in Lake Powell balancing where 28 of 30 traces resulted in balancing. Mr. Leeftang explained a concern was the current Reclamation DROA accounting results in mining of Lake Powell because DROA water in Lake Powell increases the elevation, and ultimately the volume of water that is going to be balanced from Lake Powell to Lake Mead.

Mr. Leeftang summarized his report by stating there are promising hydrologic conditions and a high likelihood of a significant increase in Lake Powell elevations, and there are concerns regarding operational impacts of DROA on Lake Powell with balancing and mining, and regarding limited ability to recover DROA water in Flaming Gorge by September 30, 2023.

5. **“Big River” Issues:**

a. **Update on Development of Consensus Alternative for Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to 2007 Interim Guidelines – Amy Haas, Executive Director**

Ms. Haas explained that the 7 Basin States spent the month of January developing a consensus-based modeling alternative in response to Reclamation's notice that it was going to supplement the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 2007 Guidelines. Ms. Haas explained that Reclamation was interested in modifying the 2007 Guidelines in order to accomplish things it otherwise couldn't such as reducing the releases from Lake Powell and insisting the Lower Basin take greater reductions. Ms. Haas mentioned a 6-State modeling alternative that includes the 4 Upper Basin states plus Arizona and Nevada, and a California modeling alternative that both emerged from the discussions. Ms. Haas explained these are not proposals, but modeling approaches Reclamation has been asked to model. Ms. Haas stated Reclamation plans to issue a draft SEIS in April and the final SEIS in July or August.

Ms. Haas explained the 6-state alternative, stating that with regard to Lake Powell and Glen Canyon Dam, Lake Powell would be operated to protect elevation 3500', which is a middle ground between 3525' and 3490', and fixed and reduced releases from Glen Canyon Dam at various elevations with additional reductions below 7 MAF as necessary to protect the 3500' elevation. Ms. Haas stated an additional aspect is possible drought response operations releases of up to 500,000 AF including recovery of those volumes, which must conform with DROA. Ms. Haas stated there was also additional Upper Basin voluntary conservation efforts included in the consensus that doesn't commit to a specific volume. Ms. Haas explained the protection elevation of Lake Mead under this modeling alternative is 1,000'. Ms. Haas further explained there is a notion of an assessment of more than 1.5 MAF of infrastructure protection volumes, which are losses due to evaporation and any sort of system loss that will be assessed against the Lower Basin. Ms. Haas stated the total reductions to Arizona, California, Nevada, and Mexico would be 1.375 MAF when Lake Mead reaches elevation 1050' and mentioned combined reductions of 250,000 AF when Lake Mead reaches 1030' as well as reductions of 200,000 AF when it reaches 1020'.

Ms. Haas discussed the California proposal which includes sliding scale releases with a minimum release of 7 MAF from Lake Powell unless greater reductions are necessary to protect 3500', and contributions of between 100,000 - 500,000 AF of wet water by the Upper Basin depending on Lake Powell elevations. Ms. Haas stated California would concede to 1 MAF of additional interim protection volumes, and additional combined reductions when Lake Mead is below 1025', however, those reductions would be based on priority.

Ms. Haas discussed the major differences between each of the alternatives and expressed concerns that California does not understand the regulatory framework within the Upper Basin and is not willing to embrace the hydrologic shortage concept. Mr. Shawcroft mentioned that California has requested more than their allotment of water through contractors, and that with all the challenges we've had it's difficult to see California working to conserve with the rest of the states when their proposal puts more pressure on the entire river system.

b. Status of Releases from/Recovery of Flaming Gorge under 2022 Drought Response Operations Plan – Bart Leeflang

Mr. Leeflang explained that in 2021 there were concerns about Lake Powell going below critical infrastructure elevation of 3490' so an emergency DROA action released 125,000 AF from Flaming Gorge. Mr. Leeflang further explained that in 2022 it was identified an additional release of 500,000 AF was necessary, and that by the end of February 2023 Flaming Gorge will have released 461,000 AF. Mr. Leeflang stated that clearly there is no need for DROA water in Lake Powell to protect elevation 3490' and that considering the way accounting is being done by Reclamation that water is vulnerable to being balanced downstream. The current hydrology has led Utah to contemplate what can be done to protect that water. Mr. Leeflang discussed two mechanisms being contemplated which are: 1) suspending additional DROA releases as of March 1st; and 2) reducing releases from Flaming Gorge as far as the minimum base flow of 800cfs, which would result in a change in elevation of Flaming Gorge on May 1st. Mr. Leeflang explained that we are doing all we can with recovery to ensure the least amount of DROA water is in Lake Powell. Mr. Shawcroft discussed the importance of DROA being flexible and stated the plan should be modified based on what we see today as opposed to how things were 9 months ago.

c. 2023 Upper Basin System Conservation Pilot Program Update – Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer

Ms. Bosworth provided an update on the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP), which she explained is an opportunity for temporary, voluntary, and compensated consumptive water use reduction in the Upper Colorado River Basin and is administered by the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC). Ms. Bosworth discussed the virtual and in-person information sessions and various meetings recently held to provide outreach of the program. Ms. Bosworth stated we have received 10 proposals so far with 9 additional inquiries for a total of 19 potential projects, and the proposed price per acre foot of water was between \$150-\$1,670 per acre-foot with the total overall water conservation volume potentially being 12,805 AF. Ms. Bosworth explained that March 1st is the deadline for submission with review and selection occurring in early March, contracting in March and implementation and verification during the 2023 irrigation season.

6. Colorado River Management Plan Implementation – Betsy Morgan, Staff Engineer, and Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer

Ms. Morgan provided an update of the Colorado River Management Plan stating the Authority has three priority areas which are measurement, drought mitigation, and hydrology and operations. Ms. Morgan discussed the metering and gaging gap analysis which is to inform next steps in improving the metering and gaging system within the Colorado River Basin of Utah and is a systematic approach to the first objective of measurement. Ms. Morgan described the timeline of the project where a kick-off was held in November, 2022, collection and organization of existing data occurred in December, 2022 – January 2023, interviews were being conducted in January – March, 2023 and the Synthesis and Preparation of the Gap Analysis would be occurring in Spring – June, 2023. Ms. Morgan described the interview approach and progress stating 2 interviews had been completed and

several were scheduled to be completed over the next 2-4 weeks.

Ms. Bosworth provided an update on a project with OpenET to apply their dataset to our system management in Utah. Ms. Bosworth explained the goal was measuring consumptive water use from the field scale to the basin scale within the Colorado River Basin of Utah and that Open ET satellite sensed data is the best available way to do this. Ms. Bosworth explained that OpenET data provides historical evapotranspiration data in detail. Mr. Schoenfeld stated the contract with OpenET was executed on January 31, 2023, the kickoff meeting was held February 10, 2023, and monthly coordination meetings were going to be scheduled. Ms. Bosworth explained the various aspects of the contract including data services, updates, and access, historical data production, crop type and land use updates, effective precipitation and consumptive use, correlation of OpenET historic data to crop coefficient methods for determining consumptive use, and intercomparison of data and ensemble refinement for Utah's Colorado River Basin.

Ms. Bosworth discussed the Utah Flux Network which she explained has the same goal of measuring consumptive water use from field to basin scale within the Colorado River Basin of Utah. Ms. Bosworth displayed a photo of a Wellington Eddy Covariance (EC) Station where the goal is to have publicly available EC data measuring evapotranspiration similar to OpenET. Ms. Bosworth explained we have made significant strides with station sighting and instrument purchasing and training with Campbell Scientific and that we should have the instruments ready for installation and network connection with AmeriFlux by March or April.

Ms. Morgan discussed the Utah Colorado River Accounting and Forecasting Model (UCRAF) and explained the pilot was in the Duchesne River Basin. Ms. Morgan explained the two phases of the pilot and stated Phase 1 was to develop the components of the model and assess water supply, rights, and losses with the Duchesne River Basin and would extend through May 2024. Ms. Morgan stated Phase 2, which would occur between October 2023 and June 2025, would use UCRAF to assess the impact of system changes to the water budget and water rights within the Duchesne River Basin. Ms. Morgan explained the phases in detail including Geospatial Datasets, Depletion-Runoff Calculator, and RiverWare Model.

Ms. Bosworth discussed Drought Mitigation research and implementation of the Ag Resiliency Study by the Authority, CUWCD, and Jacobs. Ms. Bosworth noted Phase 1 was completed between May and December, 2022 and Phase 2 is currently beginning. Ms. Bosworth discussed agDRIP, which is the Ag Demonstration, Research & Implementation Pilot Program, and explained that Phase 1 will be occurring between 2023-2027 and includes seven tasks: establish the program; develop and disseminate education materials; develop training network & resources; develop irrigation management plans for 125 farms and 50 irrigation companies; invest in equipment, alternative crops, and incentives for monitoring and reporting water use; and program evaluation.

7. River Commissioner Report – Gene Shawcroft

Mr. Shawcroft mentioned the 7 Basin states and federal government met for 2 days in Denver last month to try to develop a consensus alternative and explained that 6 states were able to come together but California, while still working with the other states, did not join the others in a consensus alternative. Mr. Shawcroft stated the Upper Division states were meeting daily to discuss SEIS and DROA and a meeting with the federal folks was planned for February 17th to discuss DROA.

8. Colorado River 101 – Amy Haas

Ms. Haas discussed the 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act and explained the 3 key elements: coordinated operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead; Authorization of a central Arizona project; and Declaration that the obligation to provide Mexico its entitlement under the 1944 treaty of 1.5 MAF is considered under this act a national obligation. Ms. Haas explained the 3 key elements in detail, how they relate to the SEIS, and how the act enabled the creation of a process whereby the 7-States representatives work together.

9. Other Business and Status of Authority Expenditures for FY 2023 – Danny Schoenfeld, Director of Finance & Administration

Mr. Schoenfeld provided an update of the Authority's expenditures and stated that in FY23 the Authority was appropriated \$9.5M (\$8M one-time and \$1.5M ongoing) which covers salaries, rent, and ongoing operational expenses. Mr. Schoenfeld explained the Authority has obliged most of the one-time funds for contracts associated with the management plan that will span the next four years and include contracts with Open ET, Metering Gap Analysis, UCRAF Model Development, and Pilot Projects. Mr. Schoenfeld explained that the FY24 budget of \$1,539,100 was presented to the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice (EOCJ) Subcommittee on January 19th and passed as part of SB6 on January 26th and was signed by the Governor on February 2nd. Mr. Schoenfeld discussed a Request for Appropriation that Senator McKell put forth for a one-time request for \$7M, and explained this funding request was heard on Tuesday January 31st and was prioritized in the recommendations at the request of the EOCJ list that was forwarded to Executive Appropriations. Mr. Schoenfeld explained this funding request would increase the funding for the Authority's Pilot Project Program along with the expansion of some of the IT initiatives we are currently undertaking, including expanded IT storage, additional mapping, and expanded modeling, and that a final decision as to whether it will be approved will be made later this month as part of the FY24 Budget and the rest of the State of Utah budget.

Ms. Teresa Wilhelmsen, Utah State Engineer, provided an update on SB 144: Water Instream Flow Amendments and explained the purpose of the bill is to help provide a sustainable future for Utah water users that depend on the Colorado River and its tributaries. Ms. Wilhelmsen explained that recent federal legislation gives Utah the opportunity to voluntarily conserve water and store the savings in Lake Powell and the conserved water could later be released to offset mandatory reductions required under the Colorado River Compact, and stated this bill would protect conserved water so that it can flow downstream to a reservoir without interference from other water users. Ms. Wilhelmsen explained that some of the late water rights most susceptible to curtailment provide municipal and industrial water to communities along the Wasatch Front and that we may want to avoid curtailment by compensating other water users to voluntarily reduce their use. Ms. Wilhelmsen explained this bill would ensure conserved water has legal protection to reach a reservoir such as Lake Powell without interference from other water users and applies to the multi-state initiative known as "Demand Management".

10. Next Meeting: March 16, 2023, 1:00 pm – World Trade Center 1st floor conference room, Salt Lake City, UT

11. Adjourn

Mr. Ferry motioned to adjourn, and the Board unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 pm.

Attachment #1 – February 16, 2023 Attendee List

**February 16, 2023
Colorado River Authority of Utah Board Meeting
Attendee List**

Board Member Attendees:

Gene Shawcroft, Chair
Joel Ferry, Vice Chair
Jay Mark Humphrey
Candice Hasenyager
Dan Larsen
Zach Renstrom (Virtual)

In Person Attendees:

Amy Haas, CRAU
Danny Schoenfeld, CRAU
Betsy Coleman, CRAU
Cody Stewart, CRAU
Lily Bosworth, CRAU
Betsy Morgan, CRAU
Holly McCall, CRAU
Bart Leeftang, CUWCD
Teresa Wilhelmsen, State Engineer
Wendy Crowther, Attorney General
Brett Behling, WSP
Joshua Palmer, WSP
Dex Winterton, MLWUA
Norma Willis, LWVUT
Suzanne Liese, Concerned Citizen

Virtual Attendees:

Bryan Dixon
Cody Allred
Megan Nelson
Malcolm Nash
Clyde Watkins
Cash Stallings
Kyle Roerink
Lisa Anderson
Evan Curtis
Jon Richens
Eric McCulley
Jason Poulson