THE COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY OF UTAH

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Colorado River Authority of Utah
March 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 – Joel Ferry, Vice-Chair**
   Mr. Ferry called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm and explained that Chair Shawcroft was unable to attend and asked him to Chair the meeting. Mr. Ferry asked each attendee to briefly introduce themself. Danny Schoenfeld introduced attendees who had joined remotely. A list of attendees is included in Attachment 1.

2. **Approval of Minutes of the February 16, 2023, Colorado River Authority of Utah Meeting – Joel Ferry**
   There being no comments on the February 16, 2023 minutes, a motion was made by Ms. Hasenyager 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) – Joel Ferry**
   There were no public comments.

4. **Hydrology Update – Bart Leeflang, P.E., Colorado River Authority of Utah**
   Mr. Leeflang began with a status update of Lake Powell and Lake Mead and stated that Lake Powell was currently at its lowest point, elevation 3520', and would probably decrease even more before increasing. Mr. Leeflang stated that water year 2023 precipitation to date was 125% and current basin snowpack was 139%. Mr. Leeflang mentioned the snow water equivalent (SWE) was looking very good, and discussed the Lake Powell unregulated inflow where the most probable projected inflow was 10.87 million acre-feet (maf). Mr. Leeflang explained that SWE was one of the metrics used to evaluate the snow condition and to project runoff. Mr. Leeflang discussed the 2023 Lake Powell unregulated inflow projections, showing the progression from December to March where projected total inflow volume increased by 3.6 maf.

   Mr. Leeflang discussed the 6–10-day temperature and precipitation outlook which showed temperatures below normal and precipitation above normal. Mr. Leeflang discussed the March 24-month study which was just released yesterday (March 15th, 2023), and explained that every potential outcome for the next year shows the elevation at Lake Powell to be above elevation 3525', and Lake Mead is still expected to be in shortage with a most probable projection of elevation 1033' at the end of calendar year 2023.

   Mr. Leeflang discussed the 2023 Flaming Gorge Operations releases and stated to date 588,267 af have been released between 2021 and 2022 and explained that because of the recent pause in Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) releases, this was less than anticipated. Ms. Haas suggested including the "Big River" Issues with this section as it was relevant, and explained the premise for the suspended releases was that under no scenario would Lake Powell reach minimum power of 3490'and therefore it didn't make any sense to send additional water from Flaming Gorge to Lake

Powell. Ms. Haas explained the suspension began on March 7th and saved approximately 37 kaf (thousand acre-feet) from being released from Flaming Gorge.

Mr. Leeflang discussed the need for DROA to protect critical infrastructure and displayed the November Lake Powell elevations with protection actions. Mr. Leeflang explained the Blue Mesa DROA releases, the shifting of the releases at Glen Canyon, and the Lake Powell release reductions all contributed to keeping Lake Powell at elevation 3510' which is well above elevation 3490'. Mr. Leeflang stated that had one of those actions been removed, even with the improved hydrology, Glen Canyon Dam power production would be shut down.

Mr. Leeflang discussed Lake Powell end-of-month elevations and explained now that hydrology is improving, our concern has shifted from maintaining power production at Lake Powell to recovering water in Flaming Gorge and preventing the DROA water in Lake Powell from causing "mining" of Lake Powell water by the Lower Basin. Ms. Haas explained that if Lake Powell is above elevation 3535' on October 2023, then the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) would balance water, and that balancing was releases from Glen Canyon Dam to balance the contents of the two reservoirs, Lake Powell and Lake Mead, as required under the '07 guidelines. Mr. Leeflang explained there would certainly be balancing, and that recovery of Flaming Gorge water was of great urgency for Utah. Ms. Haas explained the biggest issue was "mining" of Lake Powell and that Lake Powell ultimately could be worse off due to DROA operations. Mr. Leeflang explained that DROA water would need to be recovered before September 30th to avoid being balanced, and we would be harmed by the release of DROA water downstream. Ms. Haas further explained we were trying to recover 588 kaf at Flaming Gorge before the end of the water year, September 30th, otherwise DROA water from Flaming Gorge and currently in Lake Powell will be released to the Lower Basin.

Mr. Leeflang discussed DROA releases to date and explained the volume of releases with DROA versus without. Ms. Haas discussed the two spike releases in June and July, 2022, which were to benefit various fish species. Ms. Haas noted the request to Reclamation to start suspending releases was made in February, and explained there was also a request made to begin recovery operations immediately. Ms. Haas explained that Reclamation has agreed to start recovering water from Flaming Gorge and suspend releases as part of the next DROA planning process to be completed by the end of April. Ms. Haas mentioned no additional releases were being planned based on the current hydrology, and that a small amount of water released from Blue Mesa in Colorado in 2021, approximately 36 kaf, may also be recovered.

Mr. Leeflang discussed the February CRMMS Hydrology Ensemble and explained the potential range of recovery at Flaming Gorge was between 230-420 kaf. Mr. Leeflang further explained the most-probable February forecast shows 400 kaf of recovery between now and September 30th. Ms. Haas discussed the March 10th Basin States meeting and explained the Lower Basin supports beginning recovery operations immediately, and for any unrecovered DROA water in water year 2023, they will work toward a common approach to address any remaining unrecovered water (called "Delta") and how it should be accounted for. Ms. Haas explained that for several years Utah has been advocating for DROA water to be accounted for separately in Lake Powell, because if not, the DROA water influences operations and ends up hurting Lake Powell in the long run. Ms. Haas expressed concern over DROA, which originated between the four Upper-Division States and Reclamation but is now becoming a topic at Basin-Wide meetings.

5. **"Big River" Issues:**
   a. **Drought Response Operations Plan – Status of Current Operations and Potential 2023 Plan – Bart Leeflang and Amy Haas, Executive Director**
   This information was discussed in conjunction with the Hydrology Update.

   b. **Update on Development of Consensus Alternative for Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to 2007 Interim Guidelines – Amy Haas**
   Ms. Haas reminded the board that last month she reported that the seven Basin States spent January developing a "consensus-based modeling alternative" for consideration by Reclamation in its development of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to modify the existing operational criteria for the Colorado River. Ms. Haas explained that ultimately two alternatives emerged: one supported by six states (Upper Division States, Arizona, and Nevada) and a California alternative. Ms. Haas mentioned that Reclamation has been asked to model both, in addition to a no-action and a federal alternative and will issue a Draft SEIS on or after April 1st followed by a Final SEIS in late July or early August. Ms. Haas explained that both alternatives contemplate combined reductions in the Lower Basin of approximately 3 maf, however, the approaches to reductions are very different. Ms. Haas provided a high-level summary of some major differences including under the six-state proposal additional reductions of 1.375 maf occur when Lake Mead is at elevation 1050', and under the California proposal reductions don't occur until Lake Mead is at elevation 1025'. Ms. Hass stated that under the six-state proposal, 1.543 maf of reduction is based on assessments of evaporation losses against Lower Basin uses, and that California will not acknowledge reductions based on evaporation/losses. Ms. Haas explained the six-state proposal includes modeling of additional voluntary contributions from the Upper Basin and additional DROA releases compared to the California proposal that would require Upper Basin reductions between 100-500 kaf in addition to possible DROA releases. Ms. Haas explained that most importantly, the six-state proposal allocates Lower Basin reductions and evaporation based on relative shares of the river, however, the California proposal would allocate Lower Basin reductions based on water right priority dates and because Arizona is the junior water right holder, they would bear the most cuts under this plan. Ms. Haas explained the current conversation relative to the SEIS is between Arizona and California, and mentioned the two states have been in direct discussion about the additional reductions under the two proposals and how they should be allocated. Ms. Haas explained that time was of the essence given the April 1 timeline for the release of the draft SEIS and that under the California proposal, Arizona would bear the most cuts – up to 40% of their Colorado River allocation.

   c. **2023 Upper Basin System Conservation Pilot Program Update – Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer**
   Ms. Bosworth discussed the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP) timeline stating the March 1st date had passed to submit proposals and that the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) and four Upper Basin States were currently in the review and selection phase. Ms. Bosworth explained that 88 proposals have been submitted including 24 from Utah, 40 from Colorado, 22 from Wyoming, 1 from the Colorado/Wyoming border, and 1 from New Mexico. Ms. Bosworth provided an overview of SCPP which she stated was an opportunity for water users to participate in temporary, voluntary, and compensated water conservation efforts. Ms. Bosworth further explained that water users propose their method of conservation and compensation amount.

Ms. Bosworth discussed the selection criteria for the proposals, which is the framework for reviewing the applications. Ms. Bosworth explained the 24 Utah proposals include agricultural, municipal, and industrial projects, range from 6-9,000 af of conserved consumptive use, and have a total expense of $6.8M if all projects are fully funded. Ms. Bosworth stated there is a preliminary selection of 11 proposals for Utah that involve a range of 28-9,000 af of conserved consumptive use, totaling 12,580 af of conservation for a total expense of $3.9M.

6. **Smallmouth Bass Environmental Assessment Update – Betsy Morgan, Staff Engineer**
Ms. Morgan provided an update on the Smallmouth Bass Environmental Assessment and explained that Utah cares about this issue because we comply with the Endangered Species Act and participate in programs that mitigate the effects of water development and facility operations on endangered and threatened species. Ms. Morgan stated the Grand Canyon Protection Act was to "Protect and mitigate adverse impacts to and improve the values for which Grand Canyon National Park and Glen Canyon Recreation Area were established." Ms. Morgan provided a review of key dates and where concerning conditions of lower reservoir elevations and warm water conditions caused below dam spawning of the smallmouth bass, causing the NEPA process to be initiated for flow options to prevent the establishment of smallmouth bass.

   Ms. Morgan stated the proposed action's purpose and need are to prevent the establishment of smallmouth bass below the Glen Canyon Dam, which could threaten core populations of humpback chub in and around the Little Colorado River and its confluence with the mainstem. Ms. Morgan explained this targeted EA identifies various Glen Canyon Dam flow options designed to disrupt and prevent smallmouth bass from spawning, and stated that a mix of water releases would be needed to disrupt smallmouth bass spawning behavior, which is expected to begin when water temperatures reach 16 degrees Celsius. Ms. Morgan explained that reductions in water temperature combined with changes in flow velocity would be used to prevent smallmouth bass from successfully spawning and establishing downstream of Glen Canyon Dam.

   Ms. Morgan discussed four proposed action alternatives: cool mix; cool mix with flow spikes; cold shock; and cold shock with flow spikes, all of which will be considered. Ms. Morgan discussed hydropower impacts and concerns and displayed the potential 5-month flow impacts to power generation and firming expenses as estimated by WAPA. Ms. Morgan provided an overview of the seven states' comment letter that was submitted, which provided support for actions to prevent smallmouth bass establishment (noting that flow actions alone will not prevent establishment), and that the flow options are experimental and require monitoring. Ms. Morgan explained the Upper Division States / UCRC comment letter echoed points in the seven states letter as well as provided technical comments on flow options, and recommended additional analysis of impacts (e.g., hydropower, socioeconomic, cumulative impacts).

7. **Advisory Council Update, Cody Stewart, Director of Strategic Engagement**
Mr. Stewart stated the advisory councils were focusing on achieving their annual goals and planning field tours for the coming year. Mr. Stewart invited the board members to attend the advisory council meetings either in person or virtually if they had the opportunity. Mr. Stewart explained the main objective for the councils was the increase interaction with the board, and that the councils were looking to form additional councils in the future.

8. **Other Business**
   Mr. Humphrey discussed the metering and gap analysis study, noting it was interesting to see where the gaps are, explaining that in Carbon County there's a 30% metering gap and in Emery County there is a 40% metering gap, and explained the study was good to identify where we are in terms of water measurement.

9. **Next Meeting:** April 20, 2023, 1:00 pm – Washington County Water Conservancy District, 533 East Waterworks Drive, St. George, UT 84770

10. **Adjourn**
    Mr. Larsen motioned to adjourn, and the Board unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Attachment #1 – March 16, 2023 Attendee List

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

Board Member Attendees:
Joel Ferry, Vice Chair
Jay Mark Humphrey
Candice Hasenyager
Dan Larsen
Paul Tsosie

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 Leeflang, CUWCD
Brett Behling, WSP
Jared Manning, DWRi
Trevor Datwyler, AE2S
Dex Winterton, MLWUA/DCWCD
Drew Stock, AE2S

Virtual Attendees:
Bryan Dixon
Cody Allred
Malcolm Nash
Kyle Roerink
Lisa Anderson
Evan Curtis
Nate Blouin
Ben Musselman
Sue Bellagamba
Michael Eytel
Nick Schou