

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Colorado River Authority of Utah

April 20, 2023 --1:00 p.m. MT

Washington County Water Conservancy District
533 East Waterworks Dr, St. George, UT 84770

1. **Call to Order—Gene Shawcroft**

Mr. Shawcroft called the meeting to order at 1:14 pm stating there was a quorum and explained that he was unable to attend in person and asked Mr. Renstrom to Chair the meeting. Mr. Renstrom asked each attendee to briefly introduce themselves. Danny Schoenfeld introduced attendees who had joined remotely. A list of attendees is included in Attachment I. Ms. Haas specified the quorum stating Mr. Humphrey, Mr. Renstrom, and Ms. Hasenyager were in person attendees and Chair Shawcroft, Mr. Ferry, and Mr. Larsen and Mr. Tsosie were attending virtually.

2. **Approval of the Minutes of the March 16, 2023, Colorado River Authority of Utah Meeting – Zach Renstrom**

There being no comments on the March 16, 2023 minutes, a motion was made by Mr. Humphrey and seconded by Ms. Hasenyager 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. **Report of the Chair – Zach Renstrom & Gene Shawcroft**

Acting Chair Renstrom welcomed everyone to Washington County and explained the Virgin River is part of the Lower Colorado River Basin as it's part of the Colorado River drainage. Mr. Renstrom further explained there is not a compact on the Virgin River, however, it may need to be addressed in the future. Mr. Renstrom explained that while Washington County was the fastest growing community in the US, they are also leading the western states in water conservation and that their grass rebate program has exploded and only 8% of the total landscaping of any new home being built can be grass.

Mr. Shawcroft discussed working with Native American Tribes in the Basin to ensure everyone is on the same page as comments are prepared associated with the Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) and the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS). Mr. Shawcroft stated the DSEIS was released last Friday April 14th and is approximately 500 pages long. Mr. Shawcroft explained there is a No Action alternative where nothing will change, which is obviously not the direction the Colorado River Basin States want to go, and two action alternatives that require tremendous reductions for the Lower Basin. Mr. Shawcroft discussed the action alternatives: one is based on priority and the other on percentage of use. Mr. Shawcroft explained under the action alternatives there are no mandatory reductions for the Upper Division States. On Monday (April 24th) the Upper Division States and UCRC will meet in Denver to begin developing a coordinated Upper Basin response to the DSEIS which is due at the end of May. Mr. Shawcroft discussed the Upper Basin Tribal State Dialogue meeting in Page, AZ with the Bureau of Reclamation Commission and newly elected President of the Navajo Nation, Buu Nygren. Mr. Shawcroft stated the next meeting will be held in Utah May 8th and 9th where the

focus will be to explore opportunities for the Tribes and States to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and possibly provide a joint response to the DSEIS.

Ms. Hasenyager provided an overview of a recent trip to Israel by herself, Ms. Haas, Mr. Renstrom, Mr. Leeflang, Mr. Ferry, and other State of Utah leaders to understand how Israel moved from being in a water crisis to being a water rich country. Ms. Hasenyager explained that Israel's structure of water management is nationalized and regulated, Israel's culture of using every drop wisely, and Israel's culture of innovation, and explained the trip was an educational opportunity where the delegation learned a great deal. Ms. Haas explained the innovation and technology found in Israel was fascinating and the fact they reuse up to 80% of their water supply is a major innovation we could aspire to. Ms. Haas explained that Israel's water is nationalized so they have more autonomy and exclusive control over how it is used.

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

Mr. Leeflang discussed the status of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, which are 23% and 29% full, respectively. Mr. Leeflang explained the Colorado River Basin water supply increased by about 2 million acre-feet (MAF) in 2 weeks in March and displayed a table showing Upper Basin Reservoir Storage stating Flaming Gorge was at 69%. Mr. Leeflang provided a comparison between April 2022 snow-water equivalent and April 2023 snow water equivalent, illustrating a dramatic increase in snow-water equivalent in 2023 compared to 2022. Mr. Leeflang displayed photos of the snow survey at Strawberry from both last year and this year which showed how different the snowpack is. Mr. Leeflang discussed the snow water equivalent in the lower San Juan River Basin, which he explained typically struggles but is currently 1000% of median, and the Upper Colorado observed inflow is currently 157% of median. Mr. Leeflang discussed the upcoming weather models that currently favor a ridge building over the Pacific Coast and a trough over the east-central US which would bring near average precipitation and near to below normal temperatures to the Northern and Central Rockies.

Mr. Leeflang discussed the Upper Basin Reservoir Operations in Water Year 2023 and explained that as part of the recent 24-month study Reclamation will remove the operational neutrality of the 0.48 million acre-feet that was retained in Lake Powell under the May 2022 action such that balancing releases are based on physical elevations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Mr. Leeflang explained that additionally, Reclamation is now projecting balancing releases up to the maximum amount of 9.5 million acre-feet and there will be a ramp up of releases between now and the end of the water year.

Mr. Leeflang discussed the most probable April forecast which shows a significant increase since the beginning of March with Lake Powell inflow of 14,472 thousand acre-feet. Mr. Leeflang discussed the potential Lake Powell monthly release volume distribution and explained the release increases in April and May. Mr. Leeflang discussed Lake Powell end of month elevations and explained that they are pushing against 3,575', which is the upper elevation balancing tier and is meaningful in context with the DSEIS and amazing that Lake Powell can jump 50' in one year.

Mr. Leeflang discussed the Lower Basin side inflows, which he explained was the intervening flow between Glen Canon and Hoover Dams and provided a summary of Lower Basin inflows as modeled in the April 24-Month Study. Mr. Leeflang stated Reclamation has changed their modeling assumption for this year and displayed their projections for April, May, and June 2023.

Mr. Leeflang discussed the 2023 Lower Basin reduction of 721 thousand acre-feet and displayed a table depicting reductions and contributions. Mr. Leeflang discussed the Lake Mead end of month elevations and projections from the April 2023 24-Month Study inflow scenarios where Lake Mead is projected to increase under the most probable scenario to 1,068'. Mr. Leeflang explained there can be confusion because the Upper Basin operates by water year and the Lower Basin operates by calendar year.

6. **Summary of Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) to 2007 Interim Guidelines & Next Steps—Amy Haas, Executive Director**

Ms. Haas provided a summary of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), which will modify Colorado River operations through 2026 and was released April 11th. Ms. Haas explained that the States have 45 days to comment on the draft, which is almost 500 pages long, and that the Authority would be commenting on behalf of the State of Utah. Ms. Haas explained there were two action alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 2) being proposed in addition to the standard No Action Alternative, and that both action alternatives seek to protect elevation 3500' at Lake Powell and 950' at Lake Mead. Ms. Haas explained the major difference between Alternatives 1 and 2 was how the additional cuts will be apportioned, and stated that under Alternative 1, they will be assigned in strict priority, where Arizona will take the majority of the cuts, and under Alternative 2, they will be assigned based on percentage use, where California will take the majority of the cuts. Ms. Haas stated that beginning in 2024 the Lower Basin could take a total reduction of up to 2.083 MAF, including existing cuts under the guidelines. Ms. Haas discussed years 2025 and 2026, where under both Alternatives, the Lower Basin could take a total reduction of up to 4 MAF, including existing cuts, and that while the additional reductions are intended to approximate evaporation and system losses, no specific reductions are based on evaporation. Ms. Haas explained that under both Alternatives, reductions at Mead in the amount of 1.53 MAF are not seen until approximately elevation 1030', which is much lower than what was proposed in the 6-state modeling alternative.

Ms. Haas discussed Lake Powell operations and explained that neither action alternative includes mandatory conservation in the Upper Basin, which is very positive from both a hydrologic and regulatory standpoint. Ms. Haas explained that under both alternatives there is a significant change in how releases from Lake Powell will be treated, specifically, releases will be reduced to as low as 6 MAF unless the Secretary acts to further reduce releases to protect elevation 3500'. Ms. Haas explained that the Upper Basin will no longer be required to balance the reservoirs by releasing water to the Lower Basin when Lake Powell is below 3525' given the creation of the new Lower Elevation Release Tier (LERT) between 3500-3575', however, Ms. Haas explained that the stepped releases under this new LERT could be problematic because they are determined based on forecasts 6 months out, and could also be influenced by DROA water at Lake Powell.

Ms. Haas discussed the role DROA will play in whatever is chosen as a Preferred Alternative and explained that DROA will operate according to its current terms under the No Action and Alternative 1, however, under Alternative 2, DROA contributions of up to 500 thousand acre-feet are possible to protect elevation 3500'. Ms. Haas explained that regarding Alternative 1 and 2, DROA water will affect Lake Powell operations, where it will be subject to and influence releases to the Lower Basin, and that DROA water in Lake Powell will reduce the cuts the Lower Basin would have otherwise taken under both Alternative 1 and 2.

7. **Drought Response Operations Plan – Status of Current Operations and Potential 2023 Plan – Bart LeeFlang**

Mr. LeeFlang discussed the Glen Canyon Dam operating year releases for 2024 – 2026 and impacts associated with each Alternative of the DSEIS. Mr. LeeFlang explained that when the release volumes of Alternative 1 and 2 are compared, the release volumes from Glen Canyon Dam are directly a product of DROA releases. Mr. LeeFlang stated it was important to understand the mechanics and risks that are associated with DROA releases can be significant. Mr. LeeFlang explained that when water is sent from Flaming Gorge to Lake Powell, it can result in a change in operations because the elevations at Lake Powell are increased, and the shortages taken by the Lower Basin are decreased.

Mr. LeeFlang discussed the cumulative DROA volume recovery stating there was a commitment to accounting for DROA water and a move to focus immediately on aggressive recovery and explained a DROA Plan Development Chart depicting full volume recovery of 599 thousand acre-feet in mid-February of 2024. Mr. LeeFlang explained the Upper Basin States are currently working with Reclamation to develop a 2024 DROA Plan that includes aggressive recovery, which he anticipates being completed by the end of May 2023. Ms. Hasenyager asked about the Bureau of Reclamation reporting that Flaming Gorge will fill and if so is DROA paid back. Mr. LeeFlang explained the various mechanisms for creating a DROA recovery and explained the Flaming Gorge target fill elevation is dictated by where the reservoirs are on May 1st and to fill Flaming Gorge would mean its elevation would be between 6023' and 6027'.

8. **2023 Upper Basin System Conservation Pilot Program Update – Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer**

Ms. Bosworth provided an update on the 2023 System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP) and reminded the group SCPP was an opportunity for temporary, voluntary, and compensated consumptive water use reduction in the Upper Colorado River Basin, was open to municipal, industrial, and agricultural water users, was federally funded, and was administered by the Upper Colorado River Commission. Ms. Bosworth discussed the timeline where proposals were due March 1st and explained how SCPP was in the contracting and Reclamation review process and expected to be in the implementation and verification process by the 2023 irrigation season. Ms. Bosworth explained that 73 of the 88 submitted proposals were accepted which included 21 in Utah, 29 in Colorado, 22 in Wyoming (including a project with acreage in both Wyoming and Colorado), and 1 in New Mexico. Ms. Bosworth explained the estimated total conservation volume for these 73 selected projects is 37,798 acre-feet, and the total cost was \$16,827,794 with an unweighted average price per acre-foot of \$434. Ms. Bosworth discussed the various Utah proposal types which include fallowing of commodity alfalfa, fallowing of alfalfa for cow/calf operations, crop switching, and foregone leasing of storage water, and accounts for approximately 15,000 acre-feet.

9. **Potential April High Flow Experiment at Glen Canyon Dam –Amy Haas**

Ms. Haas explained that under the long-term experimental management plan (LTEMP) for Glen Canyon Dam, the Department of Interior may conduct flow experiments when resource conditions warrant and if it's determined there will not be unacceptable adverse impacts on other resources. Ms. Haas explained these experiments were designed to recreate habitat and the physical attributes below Glen Canyon Dam that would have naturally existed downstream from the dam. The focus of the current experiment is to recreate and rebuild sandbars using accumulated sand. Ms. Haas explained this experiment was set to occur between April 24-27 and consists of a 72-hour high-flow release experiment (High Flow Experiment) that peaks at 39,500

cubic feet per second (cfs). Ms. Haas explained that the 2023 conditions were unprecedented as there's a large amount of carryover sediment available in the Grand Canyon due to low annual releases over the past several years, availability of all 8 penstocks in April and the need to move a large amount of water, and the high volume of water that needs to be released throughout the summer months. Ms. Haas explained that without action, the existing sediment would be washed down to Lake Mead and further erosion of sandbars would occur. Ms. Haas explained five of the seven Colorado River Basin States, including Utah, abstained from supporting this release because it doesn't fit within the requirements of the LTEMP law. Ms. Haas further explained that while Utah supported the experiment in concept, Utah abstained from supporting the High Flow Experiment due to concerns about the legal authority in which it would be implemented. However, the experiment was approved by the Secretary and will occur the following week (April 24-27).

10. **Legislative Update: 2023 General Session – Cody Stewart, Director of Strategic Engagement, and Danny Schoenfeld, Director of Finance and Administration**

Mr. Stewart explained this was the second year with an emphasis on water in the Utah Legislature and stated that out of 575 bills that passed approximately 30 of them were water related, which is approximately 5%. Mr. Stewart discussed Senate Bill (S.B.) 144 Water Instream Flow Amendments, which modifies provisions related to instream flow and allows for certain change applications related to the delivery of water to reservoirs, which Ms. Haas described as a tool in our toolbox in the event of a shortage or curtailment. Mr. Stewart discussed S.B. 277 Water Conservation and Augmentation Amendments which creates a new change application process so farmers can save water that can be earmarked or used for another purpose. Mr. Stewart discussed S.B. 119 Per Capita Consumptive Use, which mandates that Washington County, Weber Basin, Jordan Valley, and Central Valley Water districts each calculate water the same way in a common measure more comparable to that of other states. Mr. Stewart explained that he believes these three bills will have the greatest impact on the Colorado River and offered to provide additional information to anyone who would like it.

Mr. Schoenfeld stated the Authority received a one-time appropriation for \$7 million and explained that of that amount \$5 million will be used as an expansion of Authority pilot projects under the Management Plan that are currently under development and the remaining \$2 million will be used for IT projects and other initiatives currently underway.

11. **Remarks from the Board**

Ms. Haas introduced a new Remarks concept as an opportunity for members of the Board to raise issues of concern or anything relevant to their area and explained that participation was voluntary. Mr. Humphrey stated he very much appreciated the snowpack trip at Strawberry to view the vast amounts of snow and the challenges that Central Utah has managing those conditions and appreciates the Authority staff coming to Emery County recently for a tour.

Ms. Hasenyager announced DWRe was scheduled to hold their next growing water smart workshop that brings entities together for a 2 ½ day workshop in June in Northern Utah. Ms. Hasenyager explained the Growing Water Smart workshop brings key community staff and decision-makers on water and land use planning together to collaborate to build a more resilient and sustainable water future. Team members commit to one another to actively participate in all sessions of the workshop. The workshop uses a range of public engagement, planning, communication, and policy implementation tools to help community teams realize their water efficiency, smart growth, watershed health and water resiliency goals. Ms. Hasenyager stated last

year \$5 million was appropriated for landscaping rebates and during the last Legislative Session more funds were appropriated. Ms. Hasenyager explained the Water Savers Website is expected to be live on May 1st and there would be a media event with the Governor at Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District.

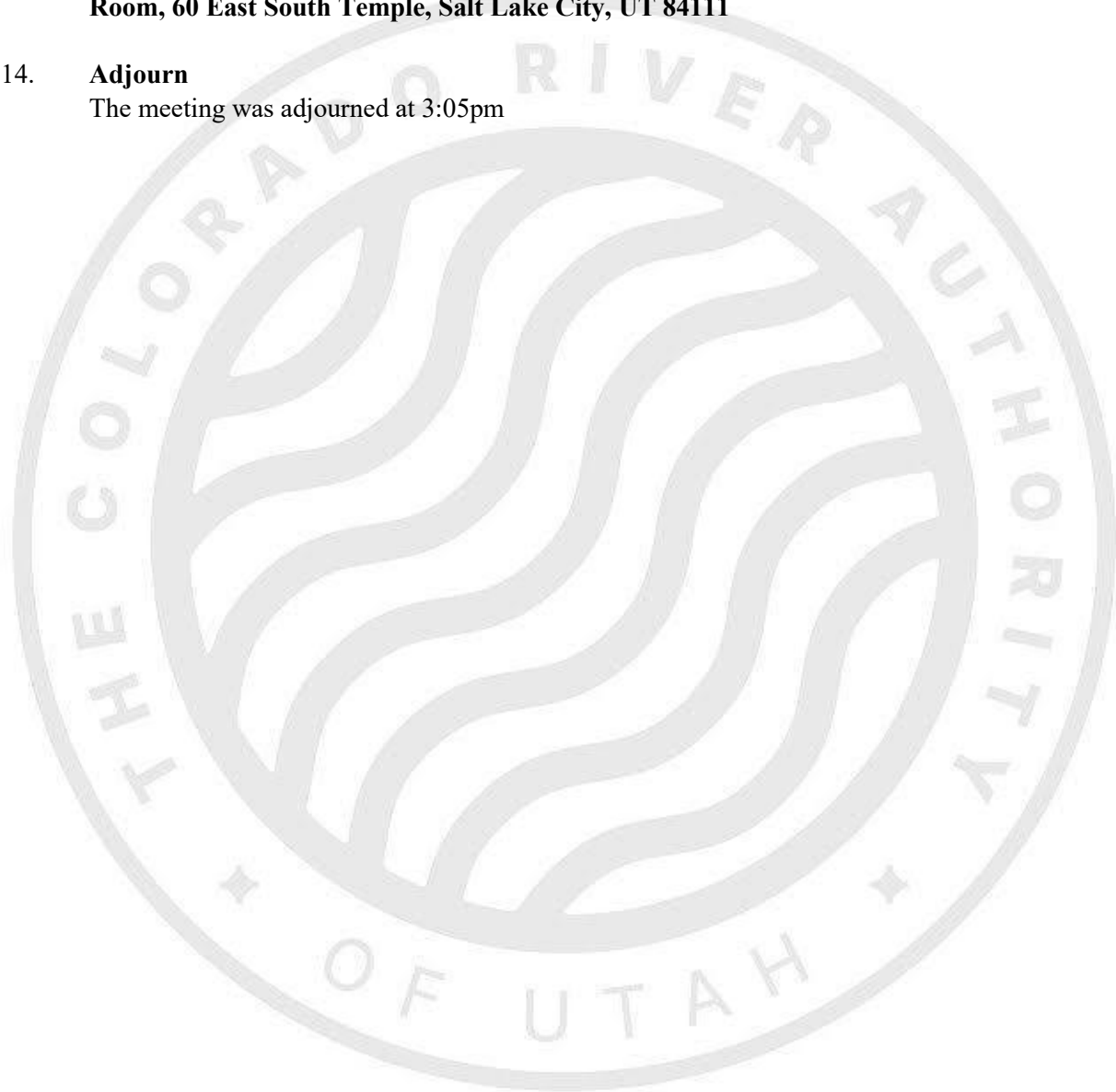
12. **Other Business**

There was no other business.

13. **Next Meeting: May 16, 2023 2:30 – 4:00pm World Trade Center 1st Floor Conference Room, 60 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84111**

14. **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05pm



Attachment #1 – April 20, 2023 Attendee List

**April 20, 2023
Colorado River Authority of Utah Board Meeting
Attendee List**

Board Member Attendees:

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

In Person Attendees:

Amy Haas, CRAU
Danny Schoenfeld, CRAU
Betsy Coleman, CRAU
Cody Stewart, CRAU
Lily Bosworth, CRAU

Virtual Attendees:

Holly McCall, CRAU
Betsy Morgan, CRAU
Bart Leeftang, CUWCD
Teresa Wilhelmsen, State Engineer
Wendy Crowther, Attorney General
Cody Allred
Evan Curtis
Brian Maffley
Edward Mueller
Malcolm Nash
Shelley Brennan

