



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
December 4, 2014

PUBLIC MEETING IN EL CENTRO TO DISCUSS FARM FOLLOWING, WATER DISTRIBUTION POLICY AND COLORADO RIVER DROUGHT

Water conservation and distribution programs affecting the Imperial Valley will be discussed at the December 17 public meeting of the Colorado River Citizens Forum. The Forum was established by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) to facilitate the exchange of information with the public about Commission activities and related matters in the region. The meeting is scheduled for 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. PST at the Imperial Irrigation District Board Room, 1285 Broadway Boulevard in El Centro, California.

David Bradshaw with the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) will discuss IID's following program, which began in 2003 to generate conserved water for the largest agricultural-to-urban transfer program authorized by the Quantification Settlement Agreement (an agreement related to use of Colorado River water). Since its inception, the program methodology has largely remained the same. However, IID has adapted the program over the years to add flexibility and better address the needs of its water users. In 2014, IID further modified the program solicitation and grower management aspects. IID's following program has created nearly 1.5 million acre-feet of conservation water.

The meeting will also include a presentation on IID's Equitable Distribution Plan (EDP) by Tina Shields, IID Interim Water Department Manager. In 2007, IID adopted an equitable distribution policy to apportion its annual water supply when demands are forecast to exceed supplies. Since that time, IID has revised the EDP multiple times to address changed circumstances and address concerns intended to facilitate water user adaptation. In 2013, with the active assistance of IID's water users, the EDP transitioned from a passive backward-looking forecasting mechanism to a system of annual apportionment. The program changes allowed the EDP to begin serving as a resource management tool to assist IID and its water users with the 3.1 million acre-feet annual cap on its Colorado River entitlement that was implemented as part of the Quantification Settlement Agreement. IID implemented this annual apportionment for the first time as a mid-year pilot project in 2013. In 2014, with the benefit

of the 2013 implementation experience, adaptive management program changes were made to facilitate the EDP's first full-year apportionment implementation. IID and its water users continue to work together to maximize the benefit of IID's annual entitlement in an integrated effort with the district's fallowing and on-farm conservation programs.

Finally, Daniel Bunk, Supervisory Hydrologist with the Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region, will discuss the ongoing Colorado River drought and strategies being implemented to meet water delivery commitments. In the Colorado River Basin, 2000 to 2014 was the driest 15-year period in over 100 years of record keeping. During that time, total water storage in the major system reservoirs declined from nearly full to about half of capacity. Entities that rely on the Colorado River are concerned with the ongoing drought, declining reservoirs, the potential for the first ever shortages in the Lower Basin, and the potential for loss of hydroelectric generation at Lake Powell. Despite these dry conditions, Reclamation has been able to meet the required environmental releases in the Upper Basin and water delivery commitments in the Lower Basin throughout the drought and anticipates meeting those commitments in 2015. This has been possible, in part, because of the 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead. These guidelines provide that Lake Powell and Lake Mead reservoir operations be adjusted based on hydrology and reservoir storage.

In response to the current hydrology and storage conditions, the annual release from Lake Powell (which is upstream from Lake Mead) in water year 2014 was reduced from 8.23 million acre-feet (maf) to 7.48 maf under the 2007 Interim Guidelines. This was the first time this has occurred since the filling of Lake Powell. Due to near average hydrology in water year 2014, Lake Powell's annual release in water year 2015 is projected to range from 8.23 to 9.0 maf or greater. Lake Mead's elevation has declined more than 50 feet since January 2012. In July 2014, Lake Mead's elevation declined to its lowest level since its initial filling in the 1930s. While water users in the Lower Basin and Mexico will receive their full water orders in calendar year 2015, latest projections indicate that the first chance of Lower Basin shortage, requiring cutbacks in water deliveries, could occur as early as calendar year 2016.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact 928-782-1598 or sally.spener@ibwc.gov.

Media inquiries are directed to:

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COLORADO RIVER CITIZENS FORUM
Wednesday, December 17, 2014
4:00-6:00 p.m. PST/5:00-7:00 p.m. MST
Imperial Irrigation District Board Room
1285 Broadway
El Centro, California

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Kevin Eatherly, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Imperial Irrigation District Farm Unit Fallowing Program – David Bradshaw, Assistant Water Department Manager, Planning & Technical Services, Imperial Irrigation District
- Imperial Irrigation District Equitable Distribution Plan – Tina Shields, Interim Water Department Manager/Colorado River Resources Manager, Imperial Irrigation District
- Colorado River Basin State of the System - Daniel Bunk, Supervisory Hydrologist, Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Region
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

Directions: From Yuma, I-8 west to Imperial Ave. exit, north past 5 stoplights to Broadway, turn right, park at lot at end of the block. They are located east of the Bank of America.

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For more information, call 928-782-1598 or e-mail sally.spener@ibwc.gov.