

**Colorado River Citizens Forum
Imperial Irrigation District Board Room
El Centro, California
April 24, 2019
*Tentative Meeting Notes**

Board Members in attendance:

Meghan Scott, Yuma County Agriculture Water Coalition
Matt Dessert, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
Mark William White, Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe
Tom Davis, Yuma County Water Users Association
Jim Buster, Southwest Resource Strategies
Phil Rosentrater, Salton Sea Authority
Brian McNeece, retired Professor
Juan Leal-Rubio, Senior Planner, Yuma County Department of Development Services
Bruce Kuhn, Imperial Irrigation District
Roberta (Bobbi) Stevenson-McDermott, Yuma Natural Resource Conservation District Member, Arizona
Association of Conservation Districts Board Member

Board Members absent:

Jay Simonton, Director of Utilities, City of Yuma, Arizona
Frank Ruiz, Audubon Society

USIBWC Staff in attendance:

Anna Morales, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC, Yuma, Arizona

28 Members of the public in attendance:

Welcoming and Introduction Remarks:

At 4:00PM Citizens Forum Co-Chair Anna Morales convened the meeting by welcoming the group and provided a brief description of the meeting agenda items.

Board members and audience briefly introduced themselves.

Presentation One: Accounting for the Use of the Colorado River Water – Paul Matuska, Manager, Water Accounting and Verification Group, Boulder Canyon Operations Office, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Mr. Matuska gave a presentation on the accounting performed, data used, accounting principles and agreements in place for the water accounting of the river.

Mandates for the Colorado River Accounting

The Secretary of the Interior is required to account for and report water pursuant to applicable Federal laws.

- 1964 Supreme Court Decree – is the official record of diversions, returns and consumptive use.
- 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act – reports consumptive uses and losses report

Accounting Process

- The development of the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) each year
- Water order approvals
 - Marks the beginning of the accounting year
 - Schedules provided form the basis for the daily forecast
 - Approved amounts create a baseline to determine potential overruns
 - Approved orders and monthly schedules are also used for river operations planning and modeling
- Forecasting
 - Approximately 85 gaging sites provide real time data
 - Daily forecast used to monitor use.
 - Allows users to adjust their uses
- Water Accounting
 - Annual water accounting reports published each year since 1964
 - Available on the web at <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g4000/wtracct.html>

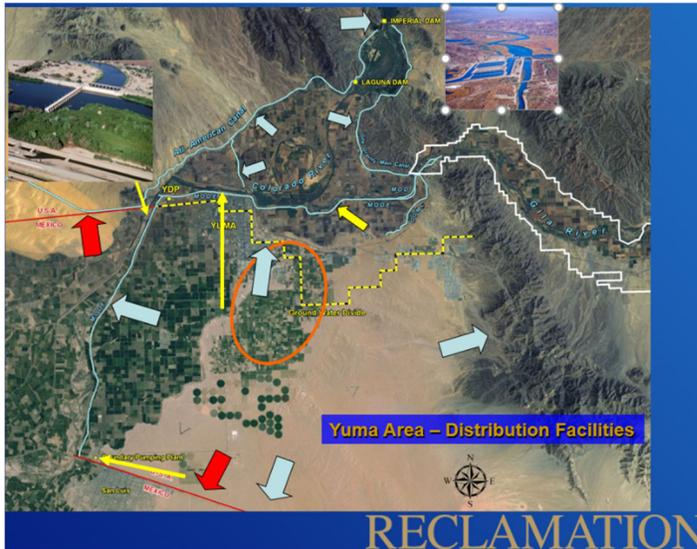
Accounting Process

- Consumptive use = Diversions minus the sum of Measured & Unmeasured Returns
- Water is considered a Colorado River diversion at the point where the water leaves the River
- All known diversions are accounted against a state's apportionment
 - No diversions are free from accounting; Federal, Local or Tribe
 - Diversions are charged to the place of use – not the place of diversion
 - Gaging sites provide real-time diversion and return flow data; most are operated by the USGS, Reclamation and IBWC. Additional sites reported by water users.
 - For shared canals, such as the All-American Canal, deliveries from the canal must be converted to diversions from the river (at Imperial Dam).
 - Diversion is calculated as the delivery to a district plus a prorated share of the canal losses. This is due to the shared capacity of the canal, where an individual user's diversion cannot be directly measured.
 - Distribution losses (Seepage, evaporation) from the canals are added to the user's delivery amount to yield a Colorado River diversion.
 - Losses are prorated to each user based on Acre Feet x Mileage factor
- Return Flows
 - Defined as returns of Colorado River water available for consumptive use in the United States or in satisfaction of Mexico's Treaty obligation.
 - Returns are credited to the user and to the state
 - Measured Returns: Drainage returning through measurable conveyances
 - Unmeasured Returns: Generally ground water flow to the River, calculated using factors applied to the user's diversion

Yuma Area Accounting

- Unmeasured returns are calculated based on the percentage of diversion.
 - Yuma Irrigation District receives return flows for approximately 21% of its diversions and North Gila Valley for about 14% of its diversions.
 - Yuma Mesa is considered to have a fair amount of returns flowing northward under the South Gila Valley to the river.
 - Yuma County Water Users Association (YCWUA) only has a small amount of land under which groundwater flows northward to the river, upstream of the Colorado River Northerly International Boundary (NIB).

- Unit B receives measured returns from the 242 Wellfield and Yuma Mesa conduit and is credited with no unmeasured returns.
- The City of Yuma receives no unmeasured returns but receives measured returns via its Wastewater treatment effluent.



The map shows some of the distribution and drainage facilities as well as the International boundaries.

- Surface Diversions
 - 98% of water used in the Yuma area is delivered as surface water
 - Most surface diversions originate as deliveries from the All-American Canal, Yuma Main Canal or Gila Gravity Main Canal.
 - Deliveries from these shared canals must be converted to diversions from the river
 - This is due to the shared capacity of the canal
 - Roughly 2% of the diversions are from wells and pumps
- Measured Returns
 - Districts whose ground water, from Colorado River diversions, flows to the river upstream of Northernly International Boundary are credited with unmeasured returns.
 - Districts whose ground water, from Colorado River diversions, flows toward the south and southwest to Mexico do not receive return credit.
 - Returns are only credited for water that originated from diversions of Colorado River water
 - Examples of these returns are
 - 242 Wellfield
 - Yuma Mesa Conduit
 - Main Outlet Drain (MOD)
 - Cooper Lateral
 - Yuma Valley Main Drain
 - Drainage Pump Outlet Canals (DPOCs)
 - All-American Canal
 - Gila Gravity Main Canal

Question & Answer (Q&A):

Q: How many water orders are received?

A: 27 from different users.

Q: How does Brock Reservoir help save water?

A: Captures water not being used. Rainfall has an effect on water orders. If one entity is taking less, Reclamation will contact another user to see if they can use it. Reclamation works closely with water users.

Q: How much water is lost in the All-American Canal?

A: A small percentage is lost.

Q: Does Imperial Irrigation District get 2.6 million acre-feet (MAF) net or is loss calculated in there?

A: There is loss by seepage.

Presentation Two: Salton Sea Management Program Update – Bruce Wilcox, Assistant Secretary, Salton Sea Policy, California Natural Resources Agency

Mr. Wilcox made a presentation on the Salton Sea's Management programs Phase 1 of the 10-year plan (2018-2028) of 30,000 acres of habitat.

The goal is to stabilize and manage the Sea to project public health and critical habitat; dust suppression; habitat and restoration projects that benefit fish and wildlife; and where possible, enhance public access and recreational amenities for the local communities.

Phase I of the Plan:

- Started in 2018 and ends in 2028
- Plan is to cover up to 30,000 acres of exposed playa
- Establishes criteria for water delivery infrastructure and habitat
- Utilizes design build and monitoring to be responsive to site conditions.
- Focus areas include New, Alamo and Whitewater Rivers.
- Also includes air quality and dust suppression projects

Elevation and exposed playa:

- Satellite imagery and hydrology model results were very close in their results.
- 2,260 acres of new playa was exposed in 2018
- Predictions are very consistent with the 2018 observations
- The Sea's elevation and exposed playa may peak in the mid 2040's.
- If big changes of exposure would occur, program would have to be accelerated.

Water Quality:

- The inflow water from both rivers has issues with fecal, pathogens and nutrients.
- When Mexico has issues with their system and sends the raw sewage into the New River, these are challenges with the River.

Status of fish:

- Fish-eating birds don't have much of a diet anymore.
- There is a decline in the fish
- Desert pupfish are doing relatively well in some drains.
- The 2018 catch of tilapia was less than half of the 2017 catch. A historic low.
- The 2018 catch saw many small-sized fish. Possible regrowth, we continue to monitor as we move forward.

Status of fish-eating birds:

- Have a serious decline in birds
- Birds are utilizing resources similar to past usage, though at lower numbers

Ongoing monitoring:

- In 2019, California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be conducting several surveys using previously adopted methods.
- The data collected is used to provide information and determine or prioritize appropriate management actions.
- Reclamation is assisting with the salinity monitoring.

Coordination and outreach:

- Instituted a new public meeting process last year
- An agreement with Reclamation was established
- Looking to interact more with the communities this summer

Current and Future Projects:

- Current efforts are at the mouths of the rivers:
 - o New River – Approximately 3770 acres, covering exposed playa, construction to start mid-2020. An additional project of 3250 acres as the Sea recedes.
 - o Whitewater Rivers – Approximately 4000 acres of playa exposure in 2023. An additional project of 2000 acres as the Sea recedes.
 - o Alamo River – 2900 acres of playa exposure in 2024. With an approximately 600 acres as the Sea recedes.
- As the Sea recedes, the additional habitat will be constructed within the 10-year plan.
- Implementing 14,900 acres of dust suppression projects by 2028.
- Limited amount of water in the area. There is no Colorado River water available for any project.
- Some drain water will be used.

Environmental Planning and Permitting:

- Anticipate reaching the 2024 target of habitat creation and dust suppression
- Agreement with Army Corp of Engineers will be implemented to support planning and permitting in mid-2019.
- Supplemental EIS and permits expected to be completed in 2020.
- Easement negotiations ongoing.

Long-Range Planning:

- Assess potential long-range solutions such as water import proposals such as from Mexico or San Diego, water quality projects and local or Regional water sources such as treatment plants.

The 10-year Plan is available online at www.resources.ca.gov/salton-sea

Allocated Resources include:

- Prop 50 with \$14 million from the Wildlife Conservation Board
- Prop 84 with \$26 million from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Prop 1 with \$80 million from the Department of Water Resources
- Prop 68 with \$190 million from the California Natural Resources Agency

Question & Answer (Q&A):

Q: With that many exposed acres covered every year, by what means are they being covered? Vegetation or underwater?

A: Some will have vegetation however we are trying to put them under water. We are trying to keep the dust down and build or recreate habitat around the shoreline.

Q: Is most of the habitat gone because of the salty water?

A: Yes, temperature is also the cause of a lot of fish kill.

Q: Is the funding listed in your presentation secured?

A: Funding is secured. Prop 1, 84 and some of 68 allocated. The Farm Bill has not been secured. If successful with Farm Bill, the project will have double what is needed. New River has some funding but not enough.

Q: What if Mexico decides to keep the water in the New River?

A: Mexico already keeps most of it now. Modeling projections are accounting for that as well.

Q: So where is water going to come from for cover and habitat?

A: Trying to get as much value as we can now.

Q: What is the logic to keep the Sea alive?

A: Dust suppression and human health. Lost so many wetlands, the Salton Sea is one of the last to get some of the habitat back and will be good for the community.

Q: What if you did nothing, what is the risk?

A: Pacific Institute did a study. It was a \$70 billion impact. The biggest concern is the public health issue, damage to the crops especially organic farms and wildlife.

Public Comments:

None

Board Discussion and Future Agenda Items:

- Presentation on the Tijuana River and IBWC Wastewater Treatment Plant as it may relate to the New River. The issues on the Tijuana River, how IBWC (Feds) involved, what has been done there that can be learned.
- Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan clarifying how it relates to the effect it could potentially have on Yuma (City, irrigation districts, tribes etc).
- Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan (DCP), Arizona's implementation plan (how it complies with DCP) and addressing the issues that Arizona faced in reaching that plan.

Next meeting July 24, 2019 in Yuma County at the Yuma County Development Services, Aldrich Hall located at 2351 West 26th Street, Yuma, AZ 85364

The meeting adjourned at 5:58pm.

*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizens Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizens Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.