

Colorado River Citizens' Forum
November 8, 2005
Meeting Notes*

Board Members in attendance:

Roger Gingrich
Brian McNeece
Paul McAleese
Tracy Register
Pablo Orozco
Eric Reyes
Marie Barrett

Board Members absent:

James Davey
Wade Noble

Staff in attendance:

Al Goff
Anna Muñoz
Anthony Espino

Members of the public in attendance:

Debbie Holscher, Citizen
Craig, Holscher, Citizen
Sol Orozco, New River Committee
Kathleen Deck, Citizen
Sam Spiller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Bill Knowles, Arizona Game and Fish
Larry Killman, Greystone
John Turner, USBR Retired
Carol Hann, Citizen
Richard, Hann, Congress of History
Russell McCloud, Yuma County Board of Supervisors
Jack Simes, USBR
Bill Dubois, California Farm Bureau
Jeff Young, BLM
Blake Schmidt, Yuma Sun

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Brian McNeece welcomed the attendees. He asked the board members to introduce themselves. He then asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Al Goff gave a brief status on IBWC Acting Commissioner Marin and staff temporary assignments.

Cocopah Restoration Project along the Colorado River

Tracy Register, Director, Cocopah Environmental Protection Office, gave a PowerPoint Presentation of the restoration sites along the Colorado River.

Project facts: Tribe borders 13 miles of the Colorado River on two different reservation areas. West reservation is 11.5 miles along the Colorado River. North reservation is 2.5 miles along the Colorado River.

Showed before and after photos of the area restored. Restoration project began February 2005. Have restored 153 acres to date. Restoration has included removal of tamarisk/salt cedar. Revegetation of native trees such as cottonwood, willow and mesquite will be done.

Question: The restoration area, is that in the river channel itself? Yes.

Cocopah has received a grant from the State of Arizona Homeland Security funds. (Showed pictures of sand bag bridges in the river) \$40,000 is to do additional restoration for security reason. This site is approximately 100 acres in the Gadsden Lakes area. This area is a major crossing point for illegal activity. Area is very thick with tamarisk. Cannot walk into the area or get equipment at site. Currently planning removal process/plan (equipment, etc.) The project will begin early December. Project should take approximately four months.

Have had four control floods this year below Morelos Dam. This helps keep non-native vegetation out with manual spraying/clearing. Have installed stairs to an area downstream of the limitrophe. If security concerns can be resolved, would like to use the area for the next bird festival in Yuma.

North project, Cocopah RV Resort, 100 acres of non-native trees cleared. A three-acre pond to be built (will be lined). Cost for maintenance is quite significant, so the Cocopah has partnered with farmers. Farmers to rent fifty acres for farming and build irrigation system for Cocopah. This area will have trails for historical insight related to the Cocopah Indian Tribe.

Question: North part project, residences have complained of a lot of dust. When is vegetation going to be put there to convey to residents?

Currently working on it. About 14 acres have been started at the south end. Will use irrigation to water area, depends on whether the wind works with us.

Question: Is there a schedule of control burns to still come?

Possibly one or two small ones. Weather will dictate when.

Question: Is there an actual completion date?

Installation of fields and irrigation park system by the end of January. Couple of months after, will adopt a tree program with the residents and schools.

Question: What herbicide is used?

Below Morelos Dam Pathfinder was used. Very effective with dye combination.

The following were answered by Al Goff:

Question: When you talked about flow below Morelos Dam, how much and where is this water coming from?

This water is seepage flow, normally 30 cfs. Eight miles downstream of Morelos Dam is dry. During the wet months with a lot a rain, water is rejected by the farmers and Mexico has control flood releases from the dam.

Question: Extra water doesn't go to Mexico?

When it rains in Imperial it rains in Mexicali. Mexico will take extra water for ground water recharge but Mexican farmers also reject water as in the U.S.

Salvinia Molesta

Jack Simes, External Coordination Group Manager, USBR gave a PowerPoint Presentation. Giant Salvinia is a highly invasive aquatic plant from Brazil. It reached the Lower Colorado River area in August of 1998 in the Palo Verde Irrigation District's drainage system and worked its way down to the Colorado River by the end of 1999.

Salvinia only needs water, sunlight and slow moving body of water to dominate and diminish the oxygen level. Salvinia can damage the environment by invading backwaters, damaging fisheries, inhibiting recreation including boating and swimming, river operations and maintenance, and operation and maintenance of irrigation district canals and drains.

Several pictures showed areas matted with the Salvinia. Salvinia cannot just be sprayed and picked up by harvester. Salvinia hides in small areas not visible and eventually spreads out.

Showed before and after pictures of areas that were infested with Salvinia. (Spraying and weevil release results). Walter's Camp has no Salvinia in area because of effective eradication.

Question: If it useful for anything?

No, continues to grow and diminishes oxygen. If fish get trapped in area, will die.

Currently Giant Salvinia has spread from PVID's drainage system downstream through the Colorado River system to Cibola Wildlife Refuge, Squaw Lake, Imperial Dam, Laguna Dam, Senator Wash, the All American Canal, the Gila Gravity Main Canal, River Mile 33, River Mile 31 and other backwaters, below Morelos Dam, and into Mexico's Irrigation and Drainage systems located in the Mexicali Valley.

Giant Salvinia has spread below Morelos Dam in Mexico. Without any control agents, it will continue to be flushed further downstream whenever the gates at Morelos are opened to release excess water, usually after large rainfalls upstream.

Giant Salvinia is also spreading into Mexico through the canals and wasteways.

Control strategies:

- Surveying of the infestation
- Mechanical cleaning of PVID Drain - Mechanical cleaning with a long-reach backhoe in conjunction with the application of herbicides has been an effective means of eradicating Giant Salvinia from much of the Palo Verde drainage system. Herbicide spraying will continue to control Giant Salvinia in much of the remainder of the Palo Verde Dam, Cibola Wildlife Refuge, and other areas along the Lower Colorado River.
- Booms – Booms are used to control the spread. They contain and isolate the Salvinia in locations such as areas with backwater or drains. It also keeps it from spreading downstream to the Imperial Dam spillway and below Morelos Dam.

- Harvester - A floating harvester has been placed in PVID's outfall drain to remove Salvinia plants captured by booms. PVID is operating and maintaining this harvester.
- Herbicide evaluations (2001-2003)
- Herbicide spraying
- Water quality monitoring
- Use of Bio-control - Cyrtobagous Salvinia (weevil) is a proven biological control agent for Salvinia Molesta. It causes damage by tunneling through rhizomes and feeding on terminal buds, which greatly reduces the large infestations of Salvinia. These weevils have been reared in Australia, and were imported under a permit for experimental release in Texas and Louisiana by USDA/ARS in October 2001.

USDA received approval in 2003 to release the Cyrtobagous Salvinia weevil at test sites along the Lower Colorado River. In Arizona, they were released on August 21st, 2003 in both the Squaw Lake vicinity and 2 km upstream of NIB. On May 11th, 2004, they were released at RM33 backwater, and on June 8th, 2004, at RM36 below Laguna Dam. In California, the weevils were released at Walters Camp and at the PV outfall drain below the Highway 78 Bridge.

No weevils were recovered during the Spring 2004 inspection at the 2003 release sites. Some reasons include a lack of Salvinia and water flow moving Salvinia. Further releases and follow-up testing will be done 2004.

- Bi-National working group - Recognition that this plant can quickly multiply and become a major problem resulted in the formation of a multi-agency Steering Committee and the development of several teams to address the problem in late 1999.

Question: With the booming process, doesn't the Salvinia eventually run-out of food or over populate itself?

No, as long as it has the sunlight, it will continue to matt out.

Question: How fast does the Salvinia grow?

Just a small fern can double in 2 to 5 days depending on water conditions.

Question: Is there a root?

No, it just floats.

Question: Does herbicide disturb anything other than just the Salvinia?

Does not affect anything else. It's sprayed and treated directly on the Salvinia. Water quality samplings are done.

Question: Have there been any complaints from the rice growers of infestation?

Not that I am aware of.

Question: How long has the task force been in existence?

Three years.

What's needed:

- Continued Bi-National cooperation through the steering committee
- Expansion of the coordination between Mexico and USDA for the use of herbicides and biological control for Giant Salvinia in Mexico.

For more information visit www.lcrsalvinia.org

Water Storage Below Imperial Dam

Jack Simes, External Coordination Group Manager, USBR gave a PowerPoint Presentation.

Purpose and Need for Project:

- The lower Colorado River supplies vital water resource for more than 25 million people in Arizona, California and Nevada.
- Reclamation manages the water resources of the Colorado River to control floods, to regulate the flow of the Colorado River and to deliver stored water for beneficial uses in the United States and Mexico.
- With increasing demands on the waters of the Colorado River, a higher level of reliability is being required of a limited water supply.
- Efficient and effective facilities to better manage and conserve the water supply
- The limited regulating capacity that is available downstream of Parker Dam, is located principally in Senator Wash Reservoir, behind Imperial Dam and behind Laguna Dam.
- Since 1992, operating restrictions have been imposed on Senator Wash Reservoir, which restrict the usable space to 62% of design capacity.
- After five years of drought in the Colorado River Basin, the need for conserving water flows below Parker Dam is now even more critical.
- Additional storage is needed below Parker Dam to improve river operations and to help assure the conservation of available Colorado River water.

Question: Senator Wash holds 60% capacity and is it for emergency?

Senator Wash was designed for 13000 AF but only holds 7000 AF

Question: Any plans to strengthen it?

Exploring that possibility.

Project goal:

- To supply additional storage that will conserve water by reducing current non-storable flows that result from operational constraints and enhancing the operational flexibility of the lower Colorado River.

Proposed Reservoir Sites Evaluation/Process:

- Forty project site were analyzed
- The top four ranked projects were analyzed
- One of the final four locations was selected, this was Drop 2 site

Potential issues identified by Reclamation:

- Construction and operation could disrupt access to existing recreational opportunities
- The proposed reservoir will not be conducive to, nor designed for public recreation
- Construction of the inlet canal would occur within the boundaries of the Flat-tailed Horn Lizard East Mesa Management area
- The inlet canal could cross private property
- The inlet canal could cross highway right-of way
- Site is within in an area in violation of national and state standards for particulate matter and ozone, a condition further exacerbated by project construction activities

Providing Comments/Input:

- To provide written comments/input via email send to rwahl@lc.usbr.gov or fax Attn: Mr. Rex Wahl, USBR (928) 343-8320. By mail Mr. Rex Wahl, USBR, YAO, 7301 Calle Agua Salada, Yuma, AZ 85364. When providing written comments please provide your name, representation, address, city, state, zip code, phone number and email address.
- After reviewing comments on the proposed project, Reclamation will analyze the effects and alternatives and prepare a draft EA per the directive of the National Environmental Policy Act. Reclamation will provide notice when the draft EA is available for public review in late fall 2005.

Question: What is the design capacity that feeds canal?

Not sure, will get back to you.

Question: Seems unnecessary to go around instead of pipe lining?

Because of private landowners, we have to go around.

Question: The land is flat, where will water sit?

Making a man-made site and it will have concrete mix.

Question: Why not fix Senator Wash? What are you saving?

It is more reasonable and cost effective to use Drop 2 instead of rehabbing Senators Wash

Question: The proposed dredging above Laguna Dam, how much storage will it provide?

It will increase storage 1300 AF

Question: The old Yuma Main Canal, is there any space in that to store water?

USBR response - not sure, will have to get back to you.

Goff response – that was proposed before and it looked good. There were some issues but not sure what the issues were.

Question: Will USBR have control of storage at Drop 2?

Yes

Question: What is the cost for this project?

Currently working on figures

Question: Will there be a generator outlet side or just free flow?

Not sure, will get back with you.

Public Comment

- Any update on the Lower Colorado River Boundary and Capacity Preservation Project? Project has been on going since 1995. The reasons for the delay are environmental issues and the flow capacity had to be surveyed first. USBWC contracted USBR to conduct a survey down south from 20S to RS20S. USBR has completed the survey and are currently processing the data. USBR will conduct another survey to calculate current flow capacity from Laguna to SIB. Once all surveys are complete, will review and discuss results. Will continue to update.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

Next meeting scheduled for February 2006 in Imperial County

Suggested agenda items:

- Mexicali II update from Mexico
- New River Committee update from Pablo Orozco
- Wetlands Report from Marie Barrett

No suggested agenda items for the next Yuma meeting were made.

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