Board Members in attendance:
Curtis L. Cloud: Retired, Bureau of Reclamation
Elston K. Grubaugh: Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District
Trina Hamby: Resident of Brawley, CA
Africa Luna-Carrasco: City of San Luis, Councilmember
P. Brian McNeese: Imperial Valley Coalition for Fair Sharing of Water
Patrick O’Dowd: Salton Sea Authority
Meghan Scott: Yuma County Agriculture Water Coalition
Tina Shields: Imperial Irrigation District

USIBWC Staff in attendance:
Dr. Maria-Elena Giner P.E., Commissioner, USIBWC
Daniel Avila, Operations Principal Engineer, USIBWC
Lori Kuczmanski, Public Affairs, USIBWC
Anna Morales, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC
Gilbert Anaya, Environmental Management Division Chief, USIBWC
Sally Spener, Secretary, USBIWC, USIBWC
Lindsey Aguayo, Supervisory Administrative Specialist, USIBWC

Welcoming and Introduction Remarks:
At 4:05 p.m. Citizens Forum Co-Chair Patrick O’Dowd convened the meeting introduced himself and turned it over to Lori Kuczmanski who provided instructions on how to use the Microsoft Teams.

Mr. O’Dowd continued with leading roll call of the board members.

USIBWC attendees were asked to introduce themselves.

Remarks from Commissioner Giner
Mr. O’Dowd introduced Commissioner Dr. Maria-Elena Giner. Commissioner Giner made opening remarks. She stated she was just sworn in and has been learning about the Commission and Minute 323 on Colorado River cooperation. She noted her long experience working on border infrastructure projects through the Border Environment Cooperation Commission. She explained the public process is very important to her and she values input from the Citizens Forum.

Presentation #1 Colorado River Basin: System Status and Outlook
Presenter’s name: Alex Pivarnick, Hydrologist, Boulder Canyon Operations Office, Bureau of Reclamation. He summarized the main points as there was unprecedented drought in Water Year 2021 with inflow projected to be one of the lowest on record. 2022 will be the first year ever of a shortage condition. Cooperation and collaboration are key to finding solutions.

For further information: https://www.usbr.gov/lc/riverops.html
Email: bcoowaterops@usbr.gov
Questions and Answers (Q&A):

Q: Are the results of the stress test hydrology available for the 5-year outlook?
A: To be released by in about one week.

Q: The August 24-Study, minimum probable showed elevation below 1030 and the Secretary is supposed to consult with the States. Has the processed started yet?
A: Not sure how that works.

Q: If there is call from the Lower Basin to the Upper Basin, to deliver 75 million acre-feet (maf) by year 9, what happens in that case? Say 75maf was delivered over the last 9 years, what happens with year 10?
A: I would assume we would operate with the Interim Guidelines Agreement. Whatever tier Lake Powell would be at the end of calendar year 2022 would be the operating tier for calendar year 2023.

Q: Even if it went over 75 maf over the 10 years?
A: My assumption is yes. This would be a higher-level management decision. I speculate we would be operating per the Interim Guidelines.

Q: If these drought conditions were to continue for another decade or so, how much roughly would you have to reduce the consumption in the Lower Colorado River basin in order to bring the system back into balance?
A: It’s not just reducing the consumption. The goal of the Interim Guidelines (slide 21 table) is, once you get down to critical reservoir elevations, it keeps Lake Mead from falling much further. It’s not just how much to reduce use, we need multiple years of good inflow as well. Hard to pinpoint a specific number, it all depends on the inflow we get in the Upper Colorado River Basin and Lake Powell as well as consumption.

Q: How far out do your projections go?
A: Our 24-month study goes out 24 months (2 years) into the future.

Q: Since you can’t see that far out on how much water is needed in the system or the use that has to be reduced, what do you think would be reasonable to keep the lakes from getting into critical conditions in the next several years if we do not have enough rainfall and snowpack?
A: We have to continue following the current plans in the Interim Guidelines and Drought Contingency Plan. If the plan does not work, these groups need to come together to figure out strategies and find additional contributions and savings to protect the lake. There has been a lot of modeling and research in developing the tables, if drought continues, then other collaborating solutions will need to be done as in the past to help find a solution.

Q: When this table (Slide 21) expires December 2025, what happens January 1, 2026 when this table is no longer active?
A: The Interim guidelines I’m not sure, however there are stipulation in the Drought Contingency plans of what happens. That is why we are starting negotiations now in 2021 so we don’t have a lapse with the guidelines, plans or agreement.
Q: You’re talking about contingency plans and how the plans to react. Has there been any modeling of the climate change impacts and things that could proactively be done that could be shared with the public?
A: Anything climate change related and long-term projections, that’s research that happens from the Boulder, Colorado office. I don’t have in-depth knowledge on the climate change models. They do run scenarios; however, I don’t know results of those models in CSRS. Is that something you would like to see more of climate change models or scenarios?
Q: Yes, it would be helpful.
A: I would add, we have a stress test that mimics the last 20 years of drought and how the system responds. Those results are published online.

Presentation #2 Salton Sea Projects, Progress, and People
Presenter’s name: G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director, Salton Sea Authority.
He described the history of the Salton Sea and various planning efforts to restore it and address dust around the shoreline. He noted that with funding available or possible in the near future, there could be a lot of activity to aid the Salton Sea in the near future.

Questions and Answers (Q&A):
Comment from Craig Elmore: We farm near the Salton Sea and have done a lot to mitigate playa dust. Would like to extend an invitation to show what has been done.
A: Some of the work you are doing would inform that study and could possibly be funded in the future.
Q: Is the perimeter lake, the model that is being used at this point going to be worked on as the long-range plan by the state? What if the University of California at Santa Cruz study comes up with a decision that water importation would not be feasible or if the UC Santa Cruz evaluation indicates sea water importation is feasible? Would that be seen as conflict or competition with the perimeter lake or seen more as the ability to provide more water supply?
A: It’s all the same landing spot. The big idea or project would require significant investments. It all must be feasible, fundable and buildable. A lot of work already has been done, using the US Army Corps of Engineers and their expertise. There will be a significant public outreach process.

Comment about a concept to convert Salton Sea water to clean water to be used for habitat while extracting pure salt.

Q: What you are saying is the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) that was signed 18 years ago, that the State of California was supposed to restore the Salton Sea, but they have yet to complete the project?
Reclamation was authorized a Multi-Species Conservation program in 2006. It has been completed and built -- a good wetland. Can we get Reclamation involved to help Sacramento? Sacramento doesn’t have its heart in it?
A: The Authority and local stakeholders can do that if we work together. The challenge is the sea is big and everyone has their special interest. We need to aggregate those special interests, prioritize the interests and fund them.
Q: I think I heard there were discussions of bringing water from other sources such as the Sea of Cortez. Has the Mexican government been consulted on that?
A: I don’t think it has been done at the state level or with any government agency. There have been with private individuals. The State of California is evaluating different proposals that include importing sea water. That is part of the evaluation process to see if they have had those consultations. It’s complex, we are talking about the Colorado River compact with the states and the Treaty doing something with the country of Mexico. It’s a clever concept worth exploring.

Tom Sephton – To supplement the response, there have been meetings with Conagua in Mexicali, discussing concepts of importing water from the Sea of Cortez to Imperial Valley for the Salton Sea. There was also a meeting with the Baja State Water Commission attended by Imperial County officials. There have been discussions between both private individuals and with federal agencies in Mexico.

**Opened for Public Comments:**
None

**Opened for Board Discussion and Suggested Future Agenda Items:**
Trina Hamby reported the Imperial County Health Department has begun posting New River sample results online. [https://www.icphd.org/environmental-health/new-river/](https://www.icphd.org/environmental-health/new-river/)

**Suggested Future Agenda Items:**

1. New River Improvement Plan progress
2. Any efforts to regulate the Mexicali treatment plan effluent and amend the Minute to match the regulations that apply to the Tijuana treatment plant.
3. Cienega de Santa Clara status and the likelihood to continue with water deliveries there.
4. Minute 323 Environmental water flows to the restoration sites in 2021. Presentation of work being done at restoration sites and impacts.

**Next meeting January 19, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. MST/PDT.** It is unknown if meeting will be in person or via webinar, TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 5:44pm.

*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.*