



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

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REPORT DOCUMENTS RESULTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL WATER RELEASE ON THE COLORADO RIVER

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) announces the release of a new report describing the impact of a binational effort to provide water for environmental purposes in the lower Colorado River at the U.S.-Mexico border and Delta. The *Minute 319 Colorado River Limitrophe and Delta Environmental Flows Monitoring Second Interim Report* documents success in delivering water to key areas to promote habitat restoration. The effort was undertaken as part of Minute 319, a five-year IBWC agreement signed in November 2012 that addresses a variety of Colorado River issues, including the environment.

According to the report, the initial release of environmental water in spring 2014, known as the pulse flow, inundated approximately 4,000 acres with surface water at depths as great as 21 feet (6.5 meters). Following the pulse flow, scientists in 2014 detected a 16% increase in a greenness index that measures vegetation. The report documents that riparian plant species, such as cottonwoods and willows, were successfully established in actively-managed habitat restoration sites. The abundance and diversity of birds also expanded, including a fourfold increase in migratory waterbirds and a 49% increase in 19 species of conservation interest.

“The successful implementation of the environmental provisions of Minute 319 sets a good precedent for future ecological efforts,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina of the IBWC. Drusina also complimented the binational team that successfully planned and executed the environmental flows.

Mexican Commissioner Roberto F. Salmon said, “The results of the monitoring efforts undertaken by the different organizations are important for planning future binational cooperative efforts that will enable the Colorado River Delta and riparian corridor environment to be protected, conserved, and restored.”

The report describes the monitoring efforts of a binational team of scientists and technical personnel from universities, non-governmental organizations, and federal agencies from the United States and Mexico studying the environmental flows released under Minute 319. The monitoring examines the effects of water deliveries on the environment of the Colorado River at the mid-point of the term of Minute 319, including the effects on vegetation, wildlife, geomorphic response, and the hydrologic response of both surface water and groundwater. A final report is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

The current report is available on the website of the U.S. Section of the IBWC at:
http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Files/Minutes%20319/2016_EFM_InterimReport_Min319.pdf

The appendices are available on the website of the U.S. Section of the IBWC at:
http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Files/Minutes%20319/Delta_Monitoring_Interm_Appendices_March2016_1.pdf

Interviews with scientists who worked on the report can be arranged upon request.

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