



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

For immediate release
May 16, 2014

COLORADO RIVER RECONNECTS WITH THE SEA FOLLOWING HISTORIC RELEASE OF WATER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Colorado River on May 15 flowed to the Gulf of California, reconnecting with the ocean for the first time in years following decades of upstream water diversions by the United States and Mexico. The milestone was achieved as part of a U.S.-Mexico agreement to provide water for the Colorado River Delta. This water, known as the pulse flow, is a component of Minute 319, an agreement of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, signed November 20, 2012 to help ensure that the Colorado River system is able to continue to meet the needs of both nations. The pulse flow marks the first time the two countries have delivered water to the Colorado River Delta to promote ecosystem restoration.

Delivery of the pulse flow began March 23 from Morelos Dam, a diversion dam located in the international reach of the Colorado River near Los Algodones, Baja California and Andrade, California, and will continue through May 18. The water release is part of a pilot project to provide water for the environment and, because of the complexities of the Colorado River system, scientists did not know for certain if the water would reconnect with the Gulf some 94 miles (151 km) downstream or if it would seep into the ground before reaching the sea. The success in reconnecting the river with the ocean is a significant achievement in the implementation of Minute 319.

“It’s been very exciting for all of us to track the pulse flow as it has moved downstream to parts of the Colorado River channel that have been dry for years. To say that we reconnected the river with the sea is especially gratifying,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina.

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon emphasized that the historic act of observing how the Colorado River flowed until it finally reached the Sea of Cortez will also bring enormous environmental benefits for the Colorado River Delta and, in general, for the entire ecosystem that has been called the world’s aquarium.

The pulse flow is just one aspect of Minute 319, which is a broad package of cooperative measures for Colorado River water management by the United States and Mexico that protects both countries’ interests in this essential natural resource. This package includes joint efforts and investment in conservation projects that allow for the generation of water for the environment while protecting the interests of water users. Mexico and other Lower Basin users will receive their full allotments of Colorado River water in 2014.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries. In accordance with the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico receives an annual allotment of 1.5 million acre-feet (1850 million cubic meters) of Colorado River water.

Fact Sheets about the pulse flow and Minute 319 are available at:

www.ibwc.gov/Files/Minutes/Min319_Fact_Sheet.pdf

www.ibwc.gov/Files/Minutes/Min319_Env_Fact_Sheet.pdf

For more information:

Sally Spener
915-832-4175
sally.spener@ibwc.gov