

## Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Colorado River Water Users Association Conference, December 16, 2011, Las Vegas

**Assistant Secretary Anne Castle:** Good morning, everyone, and thank you for the very kind introductions. The first thing we're going to do is watch a video from Secretary Ken Salazar. Secretary Salazar sends his regrets that he can't be with us in person. I think we all know that even two Assistant Secretaries and a Commissioner of Reclamation don't add up to one Secretary of the Interior. We apologize for that.

We've been trying to make sure that the Secretary was able to get here and fit this into his schedule, starting about last June, and it's always a juggling act. Unfortunately, at the last minute we weren't able to make it work.

Instead, the Secretary has taped a greeting -- I guess you don't say "taped" anymore -- recorded a greeting and message to all of you that we'll hear.

**Secretary Ken Salazar:** Hello to all of you who are attending the Colorado River Water Users Association in Nevada. I was there with you last year, and it's because all of you who are there are some of the greatest thinkers with respect to water rights and rivers ever in America. You've established a solid foundation of working through some of the toughest, most complex issues in a collaborative fashion. Today, joining you all there on my behalf is Assistant Secretary of Water and Science, Anne Castle, along with Mike Connor, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, and Larry EchoHawk, the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs.

They're a great team representing Interior. They're in Las Vegas, Nevada on my behalf. I'm here in Washington, trying to fight for a budget that makes sense for the Bureau of Reclamation and for all of our other interests all around the country. So I'm not going to be able to be there with you today, but I want to ask you all to continue to do your great work.

Your work is an example, not only for all of us who work on Colorado River issues, but on all of the rivers of America. It's probably the greatest collaborative program that we have ever seen on rivers anywhere in our nation.

I'm very proud of the great work that all of you do and, with that, I'm confident, too, that we'll be able to address the challenges ahead of us on the Colorado River.

Part of what we are doing is moving forward and making sure that we have the right relationship with the First Americans of the United States.

Today marks, also, a new chapter where the First Americans will be involved with us in an ongoing, collaborative process to develop our future vision and program for the Colorado River. I welcome the Navajo Nation and the tribes who are going to be part of this program as we move forward.

Have a great conference. I very much look forward to seeing all of you next year, and I look forward to seeing you in your individual states as I work on water and other natural resources issues in each of the seven basin states of the Colorado River.

Thank you.

**Assistant Secretary Castle:** Let's hear it for Ken. [applause]

**Assistant Secretary Castle:** Good morning from me, and congratulations to all of you on a very successful conference. As the Secretary just said: this collaboration of diverse interests that comes together to address the challenges on the Colorado River, we think, represents our best example of a productive and a successful partnership. CRWUA's theme this year of "Connections" highlights our shared investment in and our shared reliance on Colorado River resources. It's been said many times, but it's worth saying again that it's critical that all of us work together and define for ourselves the future of this critical resource.

It gives us water for farms and families. It gives us renewable energy that powers the entire Southwest. It provides wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities, and it provides the foundation for the Native American tribes and cultures.

It's our obligation to take care of this river so that we can continue to sustain the many uses that we put it to. Just as there are many layers of connections in this room and on the river, the Department of the Interior has many different roles to play in river resources.

It's our job to uphold the law of the river, to honor the many contracts that we have, and respect the water allocations that were determined by the Compact.

It's our job to protect the fish and wildlife resources and the landscapes in the 11 national park units up and down the river. And we have responsibility for protecting the interests of tribal nations in their water rights and in their cultural resources that are connected to the river.

Finally, we want to do our part to promote energy independence in this country by encouraging renewable energy development in the Colorado River Basin and ensuring that that development gets done in a sustainable way.

Each person here, each of the many groups that's represented, brings a different perspective, a different voice to the issues, to the discussions that we have around river resources. This year, we've seen the emergence of some new voices, some new groups coming together to help provide additional perspectives.

Groups like Protect the Flows, that you heard from yesterday, composed of owners of businesses in communities up and down the river, businesses like outdoor retailers, rafting outfitters, fishing guides, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, chambers of commerce. But their common element is a belief that maintaining a healthy Colorado River keeps revenue flowing into local communities.

Another new group is Nuestro Río. That's a national Latino led effort, seeking to preserve the Colorado River for generations to come. That group is engaging in Reclamation's Basin study to ensure that the Latino heritage surrounding the river is part of our narrative and to ensure that the Colorado River is protected so that it can continue to be part of the way of life for Latino communities.

I welcome all of these voices and all of these perspectives to the issues that we grapple with together and to the web of connections that we have on the river.

I want to focus first substantively on the midpoint of the river, Glen Canyon Dam. There's been lots of activity over the past year.

As many of you will remember, the Secretary announced here at this conference two years ago that we'd be putting together a framework to guide high-flow releases from Glen Canyon Dam. We wanted to be able to do those releases whenever favorable conditions existed for benefitting downstream resources like backwaters and sand bars and beaches.

We've been working since that time on putting together a protocol that defines when those conditions exist, and also defines the manner in which flows will be released from Glen Canyon Dam.

At the same time, we've been working on a framework for non-native fish control downstream of Glen Canyon. We're trying to give the endangered fish a better shot by limiting the predation of the non-natives, and that's been an issue. The control of non-native fish has been an issue of particular concern to Native American tribes.

Not long after this administration first took office, we made a very, very difficult decision to suspend non-native fish removal trips that had already been scheduled. We did that in response to concerns that had been expressed by some of the Native American tribes about the mechanical removal of trout at the confluence of the Little Colorado River.

It's a location that's honored as a sacred site by many of the tribes. As a result of those concerns and many, many hours of consultation, of workshops, of meetings, of collaboration, not only with the tribes but with other stakeholders as well, we're in the final stages of environmental assessments for both non-native fish control and a new high-flow protocol.

We've been able to make progress on both of those issues because of the tremendous scientific advancements that we've seen about how to protect resources downstream of Glen Canyon. There's been amazing scientific work done around Glen Canyon flows and around the endangered fish downstream in the Grand Canyon.

Now it's our job to translate that scientific knowledge and use it to manage the river better. That's the essence of adaptive management, and that's what's been going on through these environmental assessments and through the work of the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Work Group.

This new set of operations will be the most comprehensive adaptive management experiment on the Colorado River since the Record of Decision was entered by Secretary Babbitt in 1996.

We've also begun scoping for a new long-term plan for the operation of Glen Canyon Dam, and the need to update that plan was also noted by Secretary Salazar two years ago at this conference.

It's been over 15 years since we did a comprehensive review of Glen Canyon operations and, as I said, there have been tremendous advancements in the science that we need to incorporate and take advantage of.

We're starting to examine a new plan for operations, both for management and experimentation for the next 15 to 20 years. In October, we started an extensive public scoping process with meetings across the Southwest. We're trying to get input and reach out to all the folks who share an interest in Glen Canyon operations, the Colorado River in general, and the national park units downstream of Glen Canyon.

Our goal is to publish a draft EIS in December of 2012. I think it's important to stress what this long-term plan won't do, as well as what it will do.

None of the alternatives that we'll examine in the EIS will affect deliveries from Lake Powell to Lake Mead. Nothing in the process will alter the water allocations among the basin states or deliveries under the 2007 interim guidelines, but we will consider alternatives that deal with the timing of those flows.

We'll look at steady-flow alternatives, at various different kinds of fluctuating flows. We'll look at various different ramping rates, the rate at which you get from one level of flow to the other. We'll also look at means for increasing sediment inputs downstream of Glen Canyon Dam and temperature control devices or other methods for enhancing habitat for the endangered fish.

This plan is a big deal. We, at Interior, are going to be putting lots of time and attention and our resources into it. We want to focus on it and we want to get it done. We don't want to make decisions precipitously or move forward without appropriate input or analysis, but we also don't want it to drag on and eat up a lot of time and resources.

I encourage all of you to get involved, and get involved early. Give us your input, give us your feedback, and we'll incorporate that into how we move forward.

Also two years ago at this conference, lots going on a couple of years ago, just as we were concluding we all learned that a trial court in California had invalidated the Quantification Settlement Agreement. As that news broke, Mike Connor and I spoke to all of you and let you know that Interior viewed the 2003 agreements as binding and that we viewed them as an essential element to ensure that California remains within its Colorado River entitlement.

We pledged that we would continue to fully implement the Colorado River Water Delivery Agreement, and we've done that. Last week, we all learned that the California Appellate Court

had reversed the trial court, and held that the provisions of the QSA state agreements that had been challenged did not violate the California Constitution.

The seven basin states and Interior worked for more than a decade to craft an agreement that honors and implements California's pledge to stay within its 4.4. We can't lose sight of that historic achievement. We have to keep our eyes on the ball and not get bogged down in disputes about details that are going to come up in the implementation of any agreement as complex as this one.

We will continue to work with the QSA parties to find solutions to those challenges, and we want to make sure that we all recognize that that was a historic achievement that needs to be honored.

Just as the QSA was intended to do, our overall goal at Interior is to move forward to sustainability in the Colorado River. One of the most important ways that we do that is through our WaterSMART program.

WaterSMART was established by Secretary Salazar in 2010, and it's our signature initiative to secure and stretch water supplies throughout the country, its states that have their hands on the controls of water allocation and beneficial use. But, the federal government still has a significant responsibility to provide leadership on the path toward sustainability and to provide the tools that people need to get there.

Reclamation does that in the form of WaterSMART grants, cost-share grants that help fund conservation and reuse and efficiency projects. We have a whole spectrum of different kinds of WaterSMART grants. The majority of the money is in the form of cost-share assistance to projects that incorporate water and energy efficiencies.

But we also fund pilot projects for testing of advanced water treatment technologies to try to make available new sources of supply. We provide cost-share grants for Basin wide climate change impact studies and for system optimization reviews that help people figure out how to operate their own projects more efficiently.

Over the past two years, we've had 15 WaterSMART grants awarded just in the Colorado River Basin. And the implementation plan for the WaterSMART program includes a Colorado River pilot program. What we're trying to do with that project is demonstrate the spectrum of tools that the Department of the Interior can bring to bear on supply-and-demand imbalances.

So in the Colorado River Basin, we're working on a Basin study that many of you have participated in, and Mike Connor is going to talk more about that. USGS is working on its Water Availability and Use Assessment. Most people know it as the water census. They're fitting that additional supply-and-demand inventory work into Reclamation's Basin study.

We're also addressing the energy water nexus by looking for opportunities to increase hydropower production in a sustainable way. I'll talk a little more about that in a minute.

And today we are issuing a report to Secretary Salazar on the WaterSMART pilot program. New report. We have copies and links available. This report details all of the different things that Interior is working on in the Colorado River Basin, so I encourage you to take a look at it.

The WaterSMART program, we think, is particularly needed here in the Colorado Basin because of the historic drought that we have been experiencing over the past decade. As water managers, you all know better than anybody else that a single good year like last year doesn't mean that the drought is over. We have to use the respite that a good year provides to try to make progress and address the challenges that we know we're going to face in the next bad year.

WaterSMART is our effort to do exactly that. We want to help stretch our supplies, even as those water supplies are stressed by climate change and population growth.

Let me come back to renewable energy in the Colorado River Basin. This administration has prioritized investment in a clean-energy economy. We have an MOU with the Department of Energy and the Army Corps of Engineers that's designed to facilitate private development of hydropower generation on existing federal facilities.

We're looking for ways to increase our own hydropower generation efficiency, looking at our own projects and seeing what we can do. But we're also looking to add power generation to existing structures where it's not there and we're trying to find more opportunities to generate hydropower, like through our canals and conduits.

Reclamation is implementing the MOU by revamping its Lease of Power Privilege process. Lease of Power Privilege is the agreement that Reclamation uses to allow private development of hydropower on its facilities.

We've recently published new draft regulations for the Lease of Power Privilege, and again, we'd like your input on those. We've extended the comment period to the end of January. So tell us what you think about how we can best and most efficiently proceed to develop additional renewable energy projects where the economics make sense.

In the Colorado River Basin, we've announced private development opportunities at the Diamond Fork Pump Station in Utah and at Granby Dam in Colorado. So those are some of the ways that we're trying to increase renewable energy in the Basin.

Let me switch gears and talk about our river restoration projects, because in addition to delivering water to 31 million people and generating enough power to serve 3.5 million homes, Interior also has a significant investment in river and stream restoration programs. These programs are essential, we think, to meeting Reclamation's and the Department's mission goals of making our water supplies sustainable and securing a clean-energy future.

They're essential because it's part of our overall responsibility to be good stewards of the ecosystems that our water projects operate in. They're also essential because restoring natural systems that have been degraded by our facilities is the right thing to do. But these programs

are also critical to allow us to continue to deliver water and power supplies to our millions of customers. In order to provide reliable water supplies, we have to take care of the ecosystems that we operate the water projects in.

Better reliability is one of the most valuable commodities that we can offer to our customers, especially as climate change adds another level of uncertainty to the future. We get better reliability if we help reduce the environmental conflicts that have sucked up so much time and attention over the past decades.

Our recovery programs in the Colorado River are wonderful examples of successful partnerships, and they're really models across the country. They represent diverse interests coming together to protect fish and wildlife and restore habitat.

In addition to improving the environment and providing that security to water users that I talked about, these restoration projects also benefit local economies, and they create jobs. That's a significant benefit that we don't want to lose sight of. A Department of the Interior report has estimated that for every million dollars that we spend in river restoration, it creates about 30 jobs. Those are significant to the rural areas in which many of these projects are located.

The upper Colorado and the San Juan recovery programs focus on improving conditions for the Colorado River endangered fish, and also providing for ESA compliance on a whole spectrum of water development and water management activities.

Through this past September, those two programs alone have provided ESA coverage for 2,300 projects and 3.5 million acre-feet of depletions. Those are really significant achievements. The success of those programs can be measured through the sustained and expanding fish populations and through the absence of litigation about those projects and their ESA compliance.

It almost goes without saying -- but I'll say it anyway -- that the partnerships that exist in these programs with states, with tribes, with irrigation districts, local communities, NGOs, and the federal government... If those partnerships don't exist, the programs don't exist.

That's also true in the lower Colorado region, with the Multi-Species Conservation Program. It's closing its sixth year now of implementation, and strong partnerships and diverse partnerships are a keystone of that effort. There are 57 entities involved in the MSCP, and this year MSCP secured 3,300 acres of land and over 15,000 acre-feet of water for habitat improvement projects.

One other priority I want to mention is with the tribal nations in the Colorado River Basin. We're working to ensure that the tribes have access to the water supplies that they need and are entitled to.

Last year at this conference, Secretary Salazar signed the agreement with the Navajo Nation on its water rights in the Colorado River Basin in New Mexico. That agreement is going to enable

Navajo communities to receive clean water to their homes for the very first time in many instances. Clean water coming through a pipe, instead of having to be hauled by a truck.

Assistant Secretary EchoHawk is going to provide additional details about that work and other efforts under way throughout the basin to improve water supply conditions for the tribes.

As Secretary Salazar just said, we're celebrating at this meeting the assumption of the presidency of CRWUA by the Ten Tribes Partnership. I want to congratulate Mr. George Arthur on his assumption to the presidency and thank him for his many years of service on CRWUA's boards and committees. We look forward to working with you and look forward to your leadership in the years ahead.

This is a historic passing of the gavel, and again, I think Colorado River interests are out in front and supporting leadership by the Ten Tribes Partnership in this important group. I also want to thank John Zebre for his leadership and dedication to CRWUA. You've had a good two years, and it's because of the dedication and the leadership of your board.

I also want to take a moment to say a special thanks to Lorri Gray-Lee, Reclamation's regional director for the lower Colorado region. Lorri is moving to a new regional director position in Boise in just a few weeks. As many of you know, the progress that has been made in recent years, the entire MSCP, the negotiations with Mexico, and the progress being made on treaty issues -- those simply would not have happened without Lorri Gray-Lee.

Mike Connor is going to provide a little more detail on Lorri's leadership and how much we're going to miss her. But Lorri, I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know how grateful I am for your leadership and the excellent way that you've carried out your duties. Thank you.

[applause]

So I've run through a number of different projects and programs. Larry EchoHawk and Mike Connor are going to talk about even more. I mentioned the Navajo Gallup project that was authorized by the settlement agreement that was signed last year, negotiations with Mexico.

And on that issue, I just want to note that Secretary Salazar and I have absolute confidence that Commissioner Mike Connor is the best person in the country to be leading those negotiations for U.S. interests. You could not have a better representative, and I know that we're going to make progress and get to a sustainable solution.

We'll hear about the Colorado River Basin study, and you can tell that the Colorado River has been a particular focus in the Department of the Interior because of the many different roles that we play in its management.

We're working really hard to fulfill the Secretary's responsibility to provide reliable supplies of water and power, to conserve species under the Endangered Species Act, and to protect American Indian tribal interests. We're working hard, but it's our connections and our partnerships with all of you that make it possible to make progress.

We know there's lots going on, we know there are lots of demands on your time, it's hard to keep up with it all, but we want you to know that we really value what you do. The expertise and the knowledge that you bring to our projects and programs have immediate practical application, and they're what makes it possible for us to be successful. So we thank you for your tremendous efforts in support of Colorado River interests.

It's said that the price of a water right is eternal vigilance, and I think we're proving that theorem together in the Colorado River Basin. But I'd suggest that we all agree that the prize is worth the price. Thank you.

[applause]

Next we're going to hear from Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Larry EchoHawk. In addition to the wonderful list of achievements and amazing responsibilities that you heard about Larry already, I want to note that Larry is the longest-serving Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior by quite a lot, I believe, now. So, Larry?

[applause]

**Assistant Secretary Larry EchoHawk:** Thank you, Anne.