

CRWUA 2013 – Secretary Sally Jewell

Sally Jewell: Thank you, George. A longer introduction than I was hoping for but now you know all about my background and I'll skip any of that that was in my speech and tighten it up.

I really do appreciate George's leadership of CRWUA. I appreciate all of you being here and the commitment that you have to this organization and working together around this such important and critical resource for us, the Colorado River.

I have to say that taking this job, which is a lot different than the other jobs I've held, was made easier by following in the footsteps of someone that I highly respect, and that is Ken Salazar. There are many things that Ken brought to this job that he did a terrific job at and while I don't attempt to fit into his shoes or his big hat.

I will say that this area, his work around water, his understanding of the Colorado River, his five generations of working off the land in the San Luis Valley, and his work as a lawyer in Colorado and throughout the Basin states was a little intimidating to me because that is an area where I can't even begin to tap his expertise.

But the mark of a strong leader is the team that you pull together and I am so fortunate to have inherited this fantastic team that Ken Salazar assembled. You just heard from Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science who oversees the Bureau of Reclamation and the US Geological Survey. I couldn't ask for a finer, more well qualified colleague who has earned the trust and respect of this group in her time in position. Anne is terrific.

Mike Conner, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, who I hope will soon be approved by the Senate as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Mike is an incredibly knowledgeable resource on water issues and will be continuing to lead the way for me as Deputy Secretary if he's confirmed by the Senate or as commissioner if he's not. But we're very hopeful, Mike, because he really knows these issues inside and out. I want you to know that at the very top of the Department of the Interior you have a commitment and need to support the kind of team that I have in Anne and Mike to do the job.

I also want to say that Reclamation has a very, very strong team. The leadership of Terry Fulp and Larry Walkoviak here in this region, in the Basin states, has been terrific. We enjoyed a meal last night, a great Thai restaurant in the middle of nowhere. I can't even remember the name, something of Siam, a strip mall. I can't recommend you go there without police protection but the food was really terrific.

Anyway, as George mentioned in his kind introduction, I've been in the private sector for my whole career, and it has been varied. It started in oil and gas. It went to banking. Over the course of

that journey I did banking with farmers and ranchers. I worked with a farmer in the Columbia basin that had 60 circles of potatoes. I was shocked to know he had a 40 inch pipe coming out of the Columbia River to irrigate his fields of potatoes.

It was interesting. On that particular trip he had just finished entertaining a group of Israeli farmers that were sharing with him their practices on how they make the most use of the water that they have. They were astounded as his 40 inch pipe and the fact that what he left in the ground after harvesting was about what they would be able to harvest.

We do have a lot to learn from each other. My work as a banker throughout the West really gave me an appreciation of the importance of our farming and ranching community, of the importance of the beautiful open spaces that define this area in the west, and how water plays a central role in all of those.

The Department of the Interior is pretty big, as George mentioned, and this job is nonstop. Working with Indian tribes is a very important part of what I do, working with national parks and the Bureau of Reclamation, energy development, thinking about our landscapes holistically.

But I'm here, and this is the second time I've actually spent some significant time with leaders in the Basin states on water issues, because this is so important to the future of our nation and the future of this region, and certainly to the Department of the Interior.

I'm now eight months and one day into this job, but who's counting? You got to focus in order to do anything over a relatively short period of time. As Mike Connor and I have discussed with the timeframe of these jobs, the best thing that you can do is set them up for the future with a forward looking focus and make sure that the people, the talent, the resources, and the infrastructure is in place so that the work can continue on, just as you've demonstrated here in the Colorado Basin states for so many years.

There's three big trends that I've talked about at The Department of Interior that impact everything we do. One is we're operating at a time of constrained resources like never before. For those of you that are in state government or municipal government, you are feeling it all the way through the network. There's not as much money. People don't want to pay as much in taxes. They'd like to have the same amount of services. That has been difficult to reconcile. We are at a time when we know resources will continue to be constrained.

How do we do a better job with the limited resources we have? It's not doing more with less. In some cases, if you get to things like sequestration, it may be doing less with less. But how do we prioritize on those things we need to do?

The second major trend that's going on out there and it is affecting all of us, but I'll use the Bureau of Reclamation as an example. We have a generational transformation going on in this country. We see it at the Bureau of Reclamation with 54 percent of our employees eligible to retire within five years. Constrained resources combined with this generational shift means that we've got a very short period of time to train up some very, very talented people to take our places.

That generational transformation is going on, and what are we doing to backfill the pipeline of talent that we need to do the work that you do?

The third major trend, and you really know about this in this space, and that is climate change. The climate is changing. You feel it here in the Colorado Basin. It impacts everything we do. The best thing we can do is have our eyes wide open and say, "How do we prepare? How do we adapt? How do we be part of the solution?"

One of the reasons I took this job at Interior is because I have an opportunity in this job to be part of the solution, just as you do in the work that you do around the Colorado River, and how we use water, and how we address drought, and how we prepare these landscapes so that we can continue to do the things that are so important and define the character of the west, but do it in a way that supports water, which is the essential ingredient for life for all of us.

I laid out six priorities at Interior. I won't go through all of them, except I'll highlight one. That is to support healthy watersheds and sustainable, secure water supplies. That is your business, and that's why I am here today and why this is so important.

I also take very seriously my role as the water master of the Lower Colorado River. It's easy to kind of make fun of that. I have all these new duties that are coming at me in this job, and I said, "Water master? What's that?" Now I know what that is, very, very important role.

We need to exercise SMART management on the Colorado River. This is the lifeline, the critical resource for this entire southwestern United States. It's also critical to our neighbors to the south in Mexico, and particular in the states of Baja, California and Sonora.

We have to work together to steward this precious resource, and CRWUA does that. I just want to compliment you, George, and the team here at CRWUA, and all of you for being at the table, for working together. Whether you are a farmer in the Upper Basin or you are a municipality here in the Lower Basin like this big municipality we're in right now, this really big hotel we're in right now, it's easy to get lost, whether you are a tribal nation which may span both the Upper and Lower basins or an environmental organization that's working on healthy flows, you are coming together and solving these issues around a table, and that is really critical.

I mentioned climate change as one of the big trends that we have. You at CRWUA are understanding the impacts of climate change. You know that you are suffering from one of the worst back to back years in recorded history in terms of drought, as we enter the potential 15th year of a drought record that is the worst that we have known, even going back in the Paleo records.

Last year at this time, Interior released the Colorado River basin water supply and demand study that Anne referenced the most comprehensive study of future supplies and demands on the Colorado River that was ever conducted.

The study's findings projected significant shortfalls between expected water supplies and demands in this space and in the coming decades. It's widely acknowledged as a call to action for all of those who rely on the Colorado River, and there are so many millions of people that do.

We have inherited an enormous challenge an ongoing drought with no end in sight, and an obligation that we are at the table now and we've got to address this going forward, and we have to set up the next generation to make it better than the situation that we find ourselves in.

Let me talk a little bit about this recent period on the Colorado River and finding flexibility within the law. While many commentators appear determined to reach for simple solutions, like just renegotiate the law of the river or change the 1922 Compact, the reality is that simple solutions are a myth. The complex challenges you've faced over the past two decades have been addressed through negotiation, not litigation.

I have to say that one of the things that was very evident to me when I met with people from all of the Basin states in June adjacent to the WGA meeting there in Park City, Utah was that you were very effectively keeping politics, for the most part, out of your discussions. I can't tell you how critical that is.

While I'm a newcomer to politics, I can tell that when it gets to be political jockeying and it ties into maybe someone's reelection campaign or something they want to take on, all of a sudden you kind of lose control of that debate and that discussion. What you have done in the Basin states and what your elected officials have done is trust you to do the job to stay at the table.

These partnerships in the basin have been able to find flexibility an innovation within the law of the river and tackle the challenges that the basin has faced.

This basin is unique, unique legal foundations, unique leaders, and unique challenges. One of the first priorities that I've had was to meet with you as leaders. I have to say that I was so impressed with the group of you, the leadership that you employed, and how well you were working effectively together. I know it's hard. I know it's very, very hard. I know it's also difficult sometime to deal with your federal partners. But we will stay at the table. We will be supportive.

2013 saw some really important advances. I want to recognize the 10 flags on my left here that represent the Ten tribes' partnership that's here at CRWUA. I have worked very hard to build on Secretary Salazar's legacy of fulfilling President Obama's commitment to strengthening the government to government relationship that we have with tribal nations.

He asked that we organize a White House council on Native American affairs and he asked me to chair it. It represents nearly every cabinet secretary. My colleagues on the cabinet have been enthusiastic participants. We've met twice since it began. We are doing a much more effective job, I think, of understand and coordinating what we do for tribal nations.

For tribes in the Colorado River Basin, we recognize the river as the essential foundation for your physical, your economic, and your cultural subsistence. It's critical that we work together to address all the threats to the adequacy of the supplies and the river itself.

I want to applaud you, George Arthur, for your role as the first American Indian President of CRWUA. The organization, as I understand it, has been around 66 years. Given the role that tribes play in water, I'm a little bit surprised it took 66 years, but I'm delighted that you've led this

organization and brought the very, very important perspective of tribes to this equation and to the table.

There's some great things that I'd say we've made progress on with regard to Indian country and water rights. In the upper Colorado River Basin, the construction of the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project has just begun, and eventually 280 miles of pipeline will convey water from the San Juan River to the eastern portion of the Navajo nation, southwestern portion of the Hickory Apache nation, and to the city of Gallup, New Mexico. It's a huge project. Mike Connor was just given a beautiful picture from his colleagues in Reclamation and it showed the pipe being laid for that project, which is terrific.

In the lower basin, planning and construction has begun for agricultural water systems for the Hela River Indian community, the Tahona Autumn Nation, and the San Carlos Apache Tribe, as well as a rural drinking water system on the White Mountain Apache reservation. We are making progress.

We're also working diligently to fulfill the President's commitment to resolve water rights in a manner that benefits Indian tribes and provides certainty to water users throughout this country. The upper Navajo Federal Water Rights Team is building on the extraordinary foundation laid by the Navajo nation and the state of Utah to settle the nation's claims in that state.

In the lower basin, Fruitful Water Rights Settlement negotiations are ongoing with the Wallapa Tribe, which is terrific.

One of the Colorado River Basin water supply and demand study's key commitments was the need for a detailed follow-on study that would focus specifically on issues facing tribal communities and their water resources. I'm pleased that Assistant Secretary Anne Castle and Chairman of the 10 Tribes Partnership, Darryl Vigil, recently signed an agreement to initiate this new Study, more to come, but we're off to a great start and I really applaud the efforts of all of you and the 10 Tribes Partnership in particular in making this happen.

Next big event that happened in 2013, that was working with our friends south of the border in Mexico through the implementation of Minute 319. I have to say that I stand on the shoulders of Ken Salazar, in this particular discussion. He was instrumental in this with a great partner in this last five years and his effort with Mike Connor and so many others.

Many of you here today were instrumental in making Minute 319 a reality. Without the partnership of the US and the Basin states, as well as the efforts at NGOs on both sides of the border and the Mexican Government, this whole thing would not have been possible.

It's terrific to see, in many ways, our relationship with Mexico getting strengthened over water, over energy, and many other ways. After the devastating earthquake they experienced in 2010, we worked within the framework of the 1994 treaty to allow Mexico to defer delivery of water that couldn't be put into use due to damage to their water supply infrastructure.

They have deferred over 300,000 acre feet of water, and that means for all of us that Lake Meade stands nearly three feet higher as a result of that than it would have been had they taken their

allocation. We worked with them to craft a \$21 million package of investments from US water users, federal government, and the Mexican government that will repair damage and infrastructure but built it back better, build it back in a way that improves water efficiency and water conservation in Mexico.

We're also working with them to develop a science-based environmental flow to assess our ability to restore Riparian habitat in the Parch Greaches of the Colorado River Delta in Mexico. What Anne described in Glenn Canyon with the high flow release and the benefit of sedimentation in the Grand Canyon, same kind of thing that we hope to learn from working with Mexico on what a flood, even if it's a manmade flood, would do to the environmental conditions in that region.

These are really exciting opportunities for both countries. We've been bound together by our shared border and the Colorado River. But today we are joined as partners as we work together proactively to find solutions to our common challenges.

With Minute 319 in place, we know we have fair and predictable plans to address reduced supplies between the two countries, and we've avoided simply waiting for crisis and conflict. We've put operational rules in place to advance any shortage on the river that occurs.

I've asked Mike Connor whether he continues in his role of head of Bureau of Reclamation, but my preferred alternative, which is as Deputy Secretary of The Department of Interior to continue to lead these efforts, and you can bet that he will do that. It is our goal to develop a long term comprehensive agreement with Mexico prior to Minute 319 expiring in 2017.

I also want to say that an important step forward in implementing Minute 319 is working throughout southern California. I'm very pleased to learn this week that the Imperial Irrigation District and the Metropolitan Water Districts of Southern California have announced a partnership.

It establishes a process where Imperial can be more fully integrated in the Minute 319 framework, while at the same time protecting the interests of existing parties.

We recognize the importance that Imperial places on relationships with its neighbors in the Mexicali valley. I applaud the newly found institutional relationship between Imperial and Metropolitan and hope it's indicative of the even greater progress ahead in the multiparty and multistate coordination that has become the hallmark of the Colorado River.

In 2014, while the Basin Study is a long term call to action, immediate actions are needed. I mentioned drought earlier. We are seeing here not only historic drought, but also a changing climate throughout this basin.

In my job, which takes me from Barrel, Alaska, to the Martial Islands, to the east coast of the United States, I see climate change at work everywhere. I see coastal erosion. Here you see floods and droughts. You see wildfires. You see very dramatic changes in this landscape.

We don't know when this drought will end, if this drought will end, or if this is just a preview of what is the new normal in the basin, or perhaps it's going to get worse. We don't know. We do

know that we are looking at the worst 14 year drought cycle in the recorded history, stretching back over 100 years. We know that when we look at the tree ring record for 1,200 years, this has been one of the very driest periods that our country has experienced.

We also know that we just finished two back to back years of some of the driest years on record. There is a general census of climate models and droughts of this magnitude. Worse are likely to be more common in the southwest for decades to come. I don't think we are ready to pack up, shut down Las Vegas, shut down our farms and start to import what we eat. We've got to work together and that's what you are all doing.

What you've achieved in recent decades is a level of Federal, multistate, and tribal partnerships that exist nowhere else in the United States. You did this faced with many naysayers and doubters at every juncture.

I have to tell you, you got to maintain that solidarity, stick together, and make sure that you continue to work, because the challenge forward is going to be harder than the challenge looking backward. What does that challenge look like? How do we craft a path forward?

Anne said it a little earlier. There's no simple solutions to this. We don't know exactly what actions need to be taken in the right sequence, but we know that it's not going to be simple. I want to recall back to my last job at REI. REI is a very weather dependent company. On or around August or September, people started really hoping for snow. We had some superstitions at REI. We used to have big events at every single store and burn thousands of Twinkies.

[laughter]

You think I'm joking. You talk to somebody at REI. They got very creative. They competed with each other. They had what they call the Twinks, which was a Twinkie version of the Sphinx. Didn't help our carbon footprint, but people were convinced that it brought on the snow.

[laughter]

However, in your role in managing water, I don't think we can rely on burning Twinkies hoping it's going to bring snow.

We are committed to partnering with the stakeholders here to find new and better solutions. Scientific research, development of innovative conservation programs, incentive grants through Interior's Water SMART program, these are some of the unique ways that the federal government can be helpful.

I know my colleagues at Reclamation and The US Geological Survey in particular are really committed and tuned into doing this.

The Department is going to continue to support the efforts of partners to improve water management and operations in the Colorado River system, which many of you have referred to as tightening up system operations. I can tell you as a, maybe, rusty engineer, maybe rusty is not a good term to talk to people that lay pipe. But I've asked a lot of questions about conservation and

what we can do to reduce the waste. Think about how we are irrigating, thinking about how we are transporting, where we are losing water.

They will tell you I've been asking those questions. The good news is I've been getting some really good answers about what we are doing. It's encouraging to see the efforts that you are all making and how a few small grants in something like Water SMART can make a big difference.

We all know that the best contingency plan would be the one that has broad consensus of both basins and all the states, and the 10 Tribes Partnership as well. That's our goal. The Basin states fully recognize, as you heard yesterday, and they appreciate the risks and the challenges ahead, and that is going to be key.

Anyone who needs proof that a contingency plan must be developed quickly need only look at Lake Meade. Since 2000, while Glen Canyon Dam was making normal releases, Lake Meade fell by 90 feet. We don't seek consensus for its own sake. We seek consensus, because we all benefit when we work together.

As we did when we adopted historic agreements like the 2007 guidelines and the agreement we reached with Mexico, Minute 319, these have allowed us to conserve an additional 10 feet of water in Lake Meade.

But the Department's commitment to partnership cannot be an excuse for inaction. You can't expect us to get it done. Like my predecessors, I'm not going to ignore my responsibility to act if conditions worsen and if states can't reach consensus on contingency actions. I know you don't want to work that way. I know you want to get to the table and get the answers yourself. We are happy to be there as a partner, but we're also going to make sure that you are held accountable to making that happen.

That's why we need to work together, to identify a suite of coordinated actions, prioritized and tailored to meet local conditions in each basin. To be successful, contingency actions would be based on clearly understood triggering conditions with clearly understood goals. That's what we need. We can't just wing it here.

Our challenge is straightforward, even though the mix of solutions is not. We have to do more. We have to do it more quickly to take on the challenges that are going to be harder than what we've tackled before.

I mentioned three trends. I talked about constrained resources, generational transformation in the country, and climate change. I want to talk for a minute about that middle thing, the generational transformation.

We have been blessed in the Colorado Basin and in the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation with a cadre of highly experienced people who have been working on these issues for decades. That's the good news.

The challenging news for us is that over 50 percent of the Bureau of Reclamation folks will be eligible to retire, as I mentioned, within about five years. We need to make sure that we're transferring this knowledge, and you can't do it overnight.

I was pleased to see a couple of interns that I met earlier this year in Washington, DC from Rio Nuestro. They are working on issues of the river and understanding the river. It's great to see young people here learning at your doorstep.

I will say that when I was here in June, the hottest day, I might say, I think in Nevada at 118 degrees, that I went through Hoover Dam, spent about five or six hours there, which was delightful for an old mechanical engineer.

But I saw one thing that worried me, which is the two gentlemen that were running Hoover, Parker, and Davis Dam from the control center, the young one was my age. I'd like to say that was good, but it really isn't very good. The older one had retired and was brought back as what we call a returning annuitant, lives in Alabama. Flies back once a week to take his turn running Hoover Dam. That's not so good. We need to make sure that we are backfilling. I did talk to them about that, and they are training up some young folks.

But who is going to repair those generators where we sometimes have to buy parts on eBay? I'm not kidding, and the many parts we have to make ourselves. It takes skill, and talent, and experience to be able to do that.

We have a learning curve. We have a lot of work to do. I was really encouraged over dinner last night, talking with the likes of Terry, and Larry, and Bob about the new generation of people that they are bringing into Reclamation, which is encouraging. I met Carly last night, who is working on modeling out of Boulder with a number of other younger people that really know this basin and know it for the future.

But I challenge all of us to work on replacing ourselves with people that are even more talented than we are. I want to thank folks like Dennis Strong from Utah, who retired recently, and Jennifer Gimble from Colorado, who is now working with us in Water and Science, for their service and their commitment to working on this river.

But I want to give a real shoot-out to someone who gave, I think, a very powerful speech yesterday. I'm sorry I missed it. I'll have to look for it, and that is one of the true architects of the modern law of the river, and that is Pat Mulroy, who I don't think is able to be with us this morning. But Pat, who I met, she quickly educated me on the fact that Las Vegas is actually very thoughtful in its use of water, in spite of my comment about the high flow showerhead in my hotel room and the fountains that I was seeing all around. She quickly helped me understand, as Anne referenced, that the problem isn't in municipalities, that it's much more complicated and there's a lot going on behind the scenes that you don't see, even when you come to a place like this.

Pat was a trailblazer in western water. She challenged the mindset that each state or each basin would succeed by focusing on its own interests. She has been the basin's very own early warning

system on the perils and risks of climate change, and she's done that in a political climate that has not been easy.

We need the next generation of public servants to follow in Pat's footsteps. On behalf of my colleagues at The Department of Interior, I'd like to convey my personal thanks to Pat for her hard work and her accomplishments. Even though she's not here, please join me in giving her a round of applause.

[applause]

Thank you. That was for you Pat. I hope you heard it from Caesar's Palace. I want to just close by relaying a little story from about two days ago. I was meeting with a tribe in New Mexico, visiting the Laguna Pueblo School. I flew from Albuquerque to here. It was Southwest Airlines, full, no space available. You know what that's like.

Poor guy, not a small guy, came into the middle seat next to me late wearing a 10 gallon hat about the size of my predecessor's 10 gallon hats. I was busy working, preparing for this, preparing for my talk to the Western Governors yesterday. It wasn't until about the last 10 minutes of the light I put my book down. He looked at me and he said, "Do you work for the state of New Mexico?" I said, "No, actually, I work for the federal government." Well that kind of killed the conversation.

[laughter]

What do you do? He said, "Oh, I've got a feed lot in Texas." I said, "Oh, really? Is it closer for you to come to Albuquerque?" He said, "Yeah. I'm just across the border from New Mexico." He's a young man, probably 35-40. I said, "I'm curious. Is water an issue for you in your feed lot?" He said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I bought this relatively recently and there's no way I could have afforded to get into it if people weren't concerned about water, because that brought the price down and I was able to afford to get in."

I said, "Well, how does water work there? Where is your water coming from?" He said, "I have a well and it's coming out of the Ogallala Aquifer." I said, "Are you seeing challenges with your flow rate?" He said, "Well, I was doing OK until some farmers moved in from Idaho and they are growing corn. They are growing it for a local ethanol plant." He said, "They have cultivated areas that were otherwise not cultivated, flattened them out, he said but they've drilled wells all around beyond the bounds of where their cultivating and their piping them in with a 27 inch water pipe to irrigate this corn, which they are selling to the local ethanol plant.

So I said well, "Have you seen a direct impact? And he said, "Yea my flows are going down in my well." And he said, "I don't know how long this is going to last but it seems like a crazy use of the land here given how dry we are." So I said, "Well isn't there like a Commission or something that oversees water usage?" And he said "Yea there is but it doesn't have any teeth, the state's really not involved and actually all of our wells are metered, but if you use more than what you are allocated, you just pay as fine and actually the fine is a lot cheaper than worrying about where you are going to get your water so they just pay the fines."

I thought wow, isn't that a contrast to what is happening in this room with CRWUA, with people at the table. Not putting their head in the sand draining an ancient aquifer but they are working together at CRWUA to oversee the Colorado River in a way that is going to sustain it for the future. So I can't thank you enough for the work that you do, for your commitment to staying at the table, for your work with us at the Department of the Interior and I can tell you that under the leadership of the people at Interior, like Mike Connor and Anne Castle and our colleagues, we are always going to take the long view and we're always always going to keep in mind that public lands and waters are a trust; one that we manage not for now, but we manage for generations to come. So given current conditions that we have, we know that we've got to make every drop of water count and we've got to be careful in our use and we also have to stay at the table and keep politics out of it and I want to congratulate all of you on getting that done and I will be your partner in my term in this job in getting that done.

Thank you very much.

[applause]