

SECURE Water Act Commissioner's Podcast

Commissioner Lopez: The Secure Water Act basically asks that Reclamation assess climate impacts on water resources. In 2011 we created the Secure Water Act Report on climate change and water. The Secure Water Act requires that we create such a report every five years. 2016 is the second report and it is basically a summary of what we've learned about climate change impact on our water resources; how it can affect the availability of water, the timing of water releases, its impact on all of the uses that depend on it, how climate change can impact demands and it begins to look at what sort of activities can we do to begin to address or adapt to a changing climate and mitigate the adverse impacts.

In the 2016, SECURE Water Act Report we've got the benefit of several new completed basin studies that have shown us that we should expect that temperatures are going to rise. That is going to lead to increased demands on water from even the natural environment, also people need more water. It's going to change the way hydrology comes at us, and in many instances we're to get instead of snow, we're going to get rain.

Our basin studies look out over a 50 year horizon and analyze how we expect demands to change over that horizon and what we think is going to happen to the available water supplies. Both are impacted by a changing climate. Supplies; it may get drier and in the Southwest in particular it's expected to become drier, whereas further into the Northwest we may get more precipitation. But, in almost across the board we expect to see higher temperatures so that the change the form of the precipitation. It's going to change the way we have to operate reservoirs and how water will be used.

The basin studies that I've referred to, that are summarized in the SECURE Water Act Report, these are not, simply a Reclamation product, these are a collaboratively produced. We work with states, water users, tribes and with NGOs - anybody that has an interest within the basins being analyzed. To assess demands into the future and how we think supplies are going to be available and to try and figure out how we can adapt the use of infrastructure and available resources to mitigate the impacts of that climate change. All of this is done under a cost shared type scenarios where we put up part of the funding and our partners put up part of the funding and they also contribute in-kind services to creating these reports.

One of the new features of the 2016 SECURE Water Act Report as compared to 2011 SECURE Water Act Report is we have a new SECURE Water Act visualization tool that uses GIS information to kind of help people visualize the impacts of some of these changes to their water supply and futures. That's the sort of thing that's available and other visualizing aids that will help people understand the impacts of the changing climate.