

Purpose

The purposes of the AOP are to determine or address: (1) the projected operation of the Colorado River reservoirs to satisfy project purposes under varying hydrologic and climatic conditions; (2) the quantity of water considered necessary to be in storage in the Upper Basin reservoirs as of September 30, 2008, pursuant to Section 602(a) of the Colorado River Basin Project Act; (3) water available for delivery pursuant to the 1944 United States-Mexico Water Treaty and Minutes No. 242 and 310 of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC); (4) whether the reasonable consumptive use requirements of mainstream users in the Lower Division States will be met under a “Normal,” “Surplus,” or “Shortage” Condition as outlined in Article III of the Operating Criteria and as implemented by the Interim Guidelines; and (5) whether water apportioned to, but unused by one or more Lower Division States exists and can be used to satisfy beneficial consumptive use requests of mainstream users in other Lower Division States as provided in the Consolidated Decree of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Arizona v. California*, 547 U.S. 150 (2006) (Consolidated Decree).

Consistent with the above determinations and in accordance with other applicable provisions of the “Law of the River,” the AOP was developed with “appropriate consideration of the uses of the reservoirs for all purposes, including flood control, river regulation, beneficial consumptive uses, power production, water quality control, recreation, enhancement of fish and wildlife, and other environmental factors” (Operating Criteria, Article I(2)).

Since the hydrologic conditions of the Colorado River Basin can never be completely known in advance, the AOP addresses the operations resulting from three different hydrologic scenarios: the probable maximum, most probable, and probable minimum reservoir inflow conditions. River operations under the plan are modified during the year as runoff predictions are adjusted to reflect existing snowpack, basin storage, and flow conditions.

Summary

Upper Basin Delivery. Releases from Lake Powell during water year 2008 shall be made consistent with Section 6.B (Upper Elevation Balancing Tier) in the Interim Guidelines. Consistent with Section 6.B.1 of the Interim Guidelines, the water year release from Lake Powell in 2008 shall be 8.23 maf (10,150 mcm) unless provisions in Section 6.B.3 occur. Consistent with Section 6.B.3 of the Interim Guidelines, if the April 2008 24-Month Study projects the September 30, 2008, Lake Powell elevation to be greater than elevation 3,636 feet, Section 6.A (Equalization Tier) of the Interim Guidelines will govern the release of water from Lake Powell for the remainder of water year 2008 (through September 2008).

Lower Basin Delivery. Under the most probable inflow scenario, downstream deliveries are expected to control the releases from Hoover Dam. Taking into account (1) the existing water storage conditions in the basin, (2) the most probable near-term water supply conditions in the basin, and (3) Section 2.B.5 of the Interim Guidelines, the Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS) Surplus Condition is the criterion governing the operation of Lake Mead for calendar year 2008 in accordance with Article III(3)(b) of the Operating Criteria and Article II(B)(2) of the Consolidated Decree.

No unused apportionment for calendar year 2008 is anticipated. If any unused apportionment becomes available after adoption of this AOP, Reclamation, on behalf of the Secretary, shall allocate any such available unused apportionment for calendar year 2008 in accordance with Article II(B)(6) of the Consolidated Decree.

Water may be made available for diversion pursuant to 43 CFR Part 414¹ to contractors within the Lower Division States. The Secretary shall make Intentionally Created Unused Apportionment (ICUA) available to contractors in Arizona, California, or Nevada for the off-stream storage or consumptive use of water pursuant to individual Storage and Interstate Release Agreements (SIRA) and 43 CFR Part 414. In calendar year 2007, approximately 0.017 maf (20.97 mcm) of ICUA water stored in Arizona was projected to be recovered for use in California,² by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). In calendar year 2008, 0.025 maf (30.84 mcm) of ICUA water stored in Arizona is projected to be recovered for use in California by MWD. SNWA may propose to make from 0.015 to 0.025 maf (18.50 to 30.84 mcm) of unused Nevada basic apportionment available for storage by MWD in 2008.

The Inadvertent Overrun and Payback Policy (IOPP), which became effective January 1, 2004, will be in effect during calendar year 2008.³

The Colorado River Water Delivery Agreement requires payback of California overruns occurring in 2001 and 2002 as noted in Exhibit C of that document. Each district with a payback obligation under Exhibit C may at its own discretion elect to accelerate paybacks. It is anticipated that California paybacks for calendar years 2007 and 2008 will total 0.040 maf (49.34 mcm) and 0.013 maf (16.04 mcm), respectively.

In calendar years 2007 and 2008, paybacks occurring in California result from Exhibit C obligations and IOPP overruns. In calendar years 2007 and 2008, paybacks for Arizona result only from IOPP overruns.

During calendar year 2007, the scheduled Arizona paybacks were expected to total 606 ac-ft (0.75 mcm). In calendar year 2008, Arizona paybacks are projected to total 3,570 ac-ft (4.40 mcm).

The Interim Guidelines ROD adopted the ICS mechanism that among other things encourages the efficient use and management of Colorado River water in the Lower Basin. The creation and delivery of ICS during the term of the Interim Guidelines is conditioned upon several implementing agreements that were executed concurrent with the Interim

¹ Off-stream Storage of Colorado River Water; Development and Release of Intentionally Created Unused Apportionment in the Lower Division States: Final Rule (43 CFR Part 414; 64 *Federal Register* 59006, November 1, 1999)

² Amendatory Agreement to Agreement between the Central Arizona Water Conservation District and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California for a Demonstration Project on Underground Storage of Colorado River Water, December 1, 1994

³ Record of Decision for Implementation Agreement, Inadvertent Overrun and Payback Policy, and Related Federal Actions, Final Environmental Impact Statement

Guidelines ROD. ICS may be created and delivered in 2008 in compliance with the Interim Guidelines and appropriate delivery and forbearance agreements.

In 2006 Reclamation implemented a demonstration program in the Lower Basin to create Intentionally Created Surplus Water (ICS Demonstration Program). The ICS Demonstration Program allowed entitlement holders to undertake extraordinary conservation activities in 2006 and 2007 to reduce their approved annual consumptive use of Colorado River water and account for that conserved water in Lake Mead. The Intentionally Created Surplus Water created and accounted for under the ICS Demonstration Program is now available for delivery pursuant to the Interim Guidelines and implementing agreements.

In 2006 Reclamation implemented the System Conservation of Colorado River Water Demonstration Program (SC Demonstration Program) in the Lower Basin which allows entitlement holders to participate in voluntary conservation to conserve a portion of their approved annual consumptive use of Colorado River water in exchange for appropriate compensation provided by Reclamation. The water conserved (SC Water) would be retained in Lake Mead to assist in providing an interim, supplemental source of water to replace the drainage water from the Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District that is bypassed to the Cienega de Santa Clara and the reject stream from operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant.

1944 United States-Mexico Water Treaty Delivery. A volume of 1.500 maf (1,850 mcm) of water will be available to be scheduled for delivery to Mexico during calendar year 2008 in accordance with Article 15 of the 1944 United States-Mexico Water Treaty and Minutes No. 242 and 310 of the IBWC.