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Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study Seeks Input to Help Resolve Projected Future Supply and Demand Imbalances

The Bureau of Reclamation is announcing the initiation of Phase 4 of the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study: Development and Evaluation of Opportunities for Balancing Water Supply and Demand. The Colorado River Basin (Basin) Study was initiated by Reclamation as part of the Department of the Interior's WaterSMART program under the 2009 SECURE Water Act (P.L. 111-11).

With Phase 4 of the Study, the team is seeking a broad range of options to help resolve future water supply and demand imbalances in the Colorado River. The team will explore the effectiveness of various options and groupings of options, referred to as strategies, for helping resolve projected future imbalances. The performance of options and strategies will be evaluated over time and across the combination of water supply and demand scenarios. Due to the scale of the Basin, the magnitude and timing of projected imbalances, and the broad needs of the Basin resources being considered, a wide variety of options will likely be explored, including conservation and reuse, development of local groundwater supplies, augmentation, water transfers, and operational efficiencies.

The reports and analysis in the Study will better define options for future water management of the Colorado River Basin where climate change, record drought, population increases and environmental needs have heightened competition for scarce water supplies. Based on preliminary assessments, large supply-demand imbalances greater than 3.5 million acre-feet (maf) are plausible over the next 50 years when considering a water supply scenario that incorporates changes in climate. Work is ongoing to explore alternative combinations of supply and demand that could result in a range of imbalances both greater and less than 3.5 maf.

"Those who best understand the dynamics of the Colorado River are the people who can bring the most to the table in gathering ideas and insight on the potential future management of the basin," Commissioner Michael L. Connor said today. "Phase 4 of this basin study invites a broad discussion on ideas that can help identify how future water managers will address imbalances between supply and demand along the Colorado. Reclamation, the seven Colorado River Basin States and our many partners throughout the basin have much to learn from this study to guide future

management, so it is critical that we provide this forum to gather a wide array of public input.”

Reclamation is considering the needs of the Basin resources that are dependent upon a healthy river system, including water for municipal, industrial and agricultural use, hydroelectric power generation, recreation, fish and wildlife and water dependent ecological systems, under a broad range of conditions that could occur over the next 50 years.

“Bringing in many perspectives is critical to the success of the Study,” said Co-Study Manager for Reclamation Carly Jerla. “We are seeking input from a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties from within and outside of the Basin to help identify a broad range of ideas because no single option will be adequate to meet all of the future needs of Basin resources,” Jerla added.

Due to the inherent complexities of the Study and the many diverse interests and perspectives, new information will be distributed in the form of technical updates. The updates will be published to reflect continuous technical developments and the ongoing input of stakeholders. Interim Report No. 1 was published in June 2011 and technical updates to the reports included in Interim Report No. 1 will be published in January 2012, with additional technical updates in spring 2012. The Study is targeted for completion in July 2012.

Additional information on the Study including preliminary information on future supply and demand projected imbalances, the process for submitting ideas, and information on how to join a webinar about the Study, can be found online at: www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/crbstudy.html.

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