

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
Colorado River Authority of Utah
January 21, 2025 --1:00 p.m. MT

1. **Call to Order – Gene Shawcroft, Chair**

Mr. Shawcroft called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm stating there was a quorum. Board members briefly introduced themselves and audience attendee names were read aloud by Holly McCall. A list of attendees is included in Attachment I.

2. **Approval of the Minutes of the November 19, 2024 Board Meeting – Gene Shawcroft**

There being no comments on the November 19, 2024 Board Meeting minutes a motion was made by Mr. Larsen and seconded by Mr. Humphrey to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

3. **Public Comment Pursuant to the Public Comment Policy of the Authority (limit of 2 minutes per person) – Gene Shawcroft**

There were no public comments.

4. **Report of the Chair – Gene Shawcroft**

Mr. Shawcroft discussed the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) Annual Conference and regular Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) Meeting that was held in December, 2024, in Las Vegas. Vice Chair Ferry and Directors Hasenyager, Renstrom and Humphrey attended as well as others from the Utah water community. Mr. Shawcroft explained the seven states did not have the opportunity to meet in advance of the conference as they have in past years, which he believed was a missed opportunity. Mr. Shawcroft stated that Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) announced its comparison of five alternatives in the ongoing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the post-2026 operations.

Mr. Shawcroft explained that Reclamation recently released an alternatives report with more detail on the five alternatives being considered. Mr. Shawcroft explained these alternatives have wide sideboards to allow for new ideas, and the states have four to five months to reach a consensus before Reclamation moves forward with its existing alternatives. Mr. Shawcroft stated all seven states are committed to finding a solution and there is unity on this point.

Mr. Shawcroft explained that the Upper Division States released a press release highlighting the acute hydrologic shortage they experience annually. There is more traction on this issue with the Lower Division States and Reclamation now. Mr. Shawcroft stated a two-hour webinar was held to explain the concept of hydrologic shortage and the group continues to work toward a supply-based approach rather than a demand-based approach to Colorado River operations. Mr. Shawcroft stated the Upper and Lower Division States will now jointly create meeting agendas to improve communication and coordination.

Mr. Shawcroft stated Doug Burgum, former Governor of North Dakota, is the nominee for Secretary of Interior, and Kate MacGregor has been nominated to serve as Interior's Deputy Secretary.

Vice Chair Ferry explained that the state of Utah received a \$50 million grant from Reclamation for work on Great Salt Lake and that a contract was signed with Reclamation to secure the funds on January 17, 2025.

5. **Report of the Executive Director – Amy Haas, Executive Director**

Ms. Haas discussed federal legislative update, including reauthorization of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fishes Recovery Program and the San Juan Recovery Implementation Program, which are important for water users in Utah under the Endangered Species Act. Ms. Haas explained the Salinity Control Fix Act, introduced by former Representative John Curtis, was passed and signed into law. Ms. Haas stated the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act did not pass which was of concern to Utah since it would have allowed Colorado River Tribes to use their Upper Basin apportionment in the Lower Basin.

Ms. Haas discussed the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP) stating the program reauthorization did not go through, but a reauthorization bill has been reintroduced by Wyoming Representative Hageman and a hearing is scheduled for this week.

Ms. Haas stated that Reclamation unveiled a comparison of five alternatives for post-2026 operations in December and released a 42-page alternatives report. Ms. Haas explained that neither the Upper nor Lower Division States alternatives were included in the five alternatives, but a basin hybrid including elements from both was included. Ms. Haas explained the alternatives include a federal authorities alternative; a federal authorities hybrid alternative; a cooperative conservation alternative; a basin hybrid alternative; and a no-action alternative. Reclamation is using the alternatives to bring the seven states back to the table for negotiations. Ms. Haas explained the group needs to talk to Reclamation to understand the concepts set forth in the report.

Ms. Haas discussed a federal executive order called “Unleashing American Energy” and explained that it directs federal agencies to pause the disbursement of funds under the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which could impact unobligated funds, including funds earmarked for Utah water users.

Mr. Stilson reported on federal funding stating Reclamation announced \$388 million in grant funding for Upper Colorado River Basin states under the conservation efficiency program, with \$96 million dedicated to projects entirely within Utah and \$64 million for projects with some work in Utah. Mr. Stilson explained 12 of 13 proposed projects in Utah were funded and the Department of Natural Resources has six projects funded. Mr. Stilson explained three local government projects were funded including projects in Moab and the Spanish Valley, six tribal applications were funded, four of which were in Utah, and two multi-state applications were funded. Mr. Stilson stated that due to the executive order these funds are at risk, especially for projects without a grant or contract in place.

6. **Advisory Council Presentations to the Board**

- **Northern Advisory Council (NAC) – Jon Schutz, Councilmember**

Mr. Schutz presented the NAC’s objectives and recommendations, noting the diversity of the NAC’s members, which include environmental groups, water rights attorneys, and water users. Mr. Schutz stated the NAC’s objectives include continuing to learn about Utah Colorado River issues, engaging with the public, and expanding the NAC to include a

Tribal representative and a financial analyst. Mr. Schutz explained the recommendations include balancing Utah's interests, considering ecological health and compact allocations, and planning for curtailment scenarios.

- Central Advisory Council (CAC) William Merkley, Co-Chair

William Merkley presented the CAC's report, highlighting support for the System Conservation Pilot Program, demand management pilot program, metering and gap analysis, provisional accounting in Lake Powell, and recognition of hydrologic shortage in the Upper Basin. Mr. Merkley discussed the CAC's concerns about the concept of total system contents found in the Lower Basin proposal and the Reclamation alternatives, and the impacts of experimental releases from Flaming Gorge to river-front farms.

- Agriculture Advisory Council (AAC) – Steve Hanberg, Co-Chair

Mr. Hanberg presented the AAC's objectives and recommendations emphasizing the importance of agriculture to Utah and its rural communities. Mr. Hanberg explained the AAC aims to identify opportunities for agriculture to participate in conservation efforts, protect established water rights, and promote voluntary water use reduction programs. Mr. Hanberg explained the AAC seeks to maintain focus on Colorado River issues, avoid redirecting Colorado River water to the Great Salt Lake, protect system water users, ensure transparent water rights transactions, and recognize the importance of agriculture in the Utah economy.

- Southern Advisory Council (SAC) – Adam Snow, Co-Chair

Mr. Snow discussed the SAC's transition from information gathering to public outreach at the local level. Mr. Snow explained the SAC recommends targeting public outreach, hosting listening sessions, continuing to expand understanding of issues, and providing real-world examples. Mr. Snow explained the SAC requests to be split into two separate councils, Southwest and Southeast. Mr. Snow explained the SAC emphasized conservation and the need to remember that a small portion of Utah is in the Lower Basin.

7. Update on the Utah Demand Management Pilot Program Process – Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer

Ms. Bosworth provided an update on the Utah Demand Management Pilot Program (DMPP), which aims to inform a full-scale program and maintain viable agricultural communities by facilitating temporary, voluntary, compensated, and protected conservation of water use. Ms. Bosworth stated the application period closed on January 15, 2025 and 27 total applications, including 19 for full or partial season and eight for storage forbearance or lease change projects, were received. Ms. Bosworth stated there were no applications for irrigation system conversion projects.

Ms. Bosworth explained the next step is filtering and scoring applications. Scoring will be supported by an Evaluation Committee with representatives from Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, Utah Division of Water Resources, the Great Salt Lake Commissioner's Office, the Authority, and the Authority's consulting team. Ms. Bosworth explained DMPP is intended to be a way to guarantee more meaningful conservation in Utah and the Authority will represent that there is a conservation program in place for the change application process.

8. Hydrology and System Status Update – Betsy Morgan, Staff Engineer & Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer

Ms. Bosworth provided an update on hydrology explaining soil moisture conditions are dry, especially in the headwater regions. Ms. Bosworth stated the current streamflow is normal to below normal and the snowpack is slightly below normal at 91% of the median in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Ms. Bosworth stated the National Resource Conservation Service forecasts show a wide range of possible scenarios for the water year and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasts below average precipitation and above-average temperatures in the Upper Basin. Ms. Bosworth explained that drought conditions are abnormally dry throughout much of the Upper Basin.

Ms. Morgan explained Flaming Gorge is 85% full, Fontenelle is 47% full, and Lake Powell is 36% full. Ms. Morgan stated the total system content is 42% full, which is similar to one year ago. The most probable unregulated inflow volume for Lake Powell in water year 2025 has decreased significantly since the November forecast. Ms. Morgan explained the forecasted water year 2026 release has been pushed into the mid-elevation release tier, with a release of 7.48-million-acre feet.

9. Remarks from the Board

Logan Anderson stated that all Board Members had completed their conflict-of-interest statements which were posted on the Authority's website and the Lt. Governor was informed of their completion and location.

10. Other Business

11. Next Meeting: February 25, 2025, 1:00 pm World Trade Center 1st Floor Conference Room, 60 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

13. Closed Session as needed to discuss interstate claims about the use of water from the Colorado River system and to protect classified records, legal strategy, or the ability of the state to carry out negotiations (UCA 52-4-205(2)(e)).

The Board moved to go into a closed session to discuss interstate claims to the use of water from the Colorado River and to protect classified records.

12. Adjourn

The Board meeting was adjourned at 4:20pm

**January 21, 2025
Colorado River Authority of Utah Board Meeting**

Board Member Attendees:

Gene Shawcroft, Chair
Joel Ferry, Vice Chair
Candice Hasenyager
Jay Mark Humphrey
Dan Larsen
Zach Renstrom

Attendees:

Amy Haas, CRAU
Betsy Coleman, CRAU
Betsy Morgan, CRAU
Lily Bosworth, CRAU
Holly McCall, CRAU
Cody Stewart, CRAU
Marc Stilson, CRAU
Logan Anderson, CRAU
Jon Schutz, NAC
Bart Leeftang, CUWCD
Sarah Shechter, Utah AGO
Gordon Rowe, Utah AGO
Wendy Crowther, AGO
Cody Wilkins, Ag AC
Steve Hanberg, Ag AC
William Merkley, CAC
Edward Mueller, Deputy State Water Agent

Virtual Attendees:

Joshua Ward
Robert Sakata
Sue Bellagamba
Lynn Jackson
Gary Brimley
Michael Drake
Dave Evans
Jordan Nielson
Gayle McKeachnie
Rachel Anderson
Brett Behling
Gordon Moon
Tom Bruton
Andrew Dutson

Richard Salas
Dex Winterton
Bryan Dixon
Trent Potter
Scott McGettigan
Derris Jones
Cody Allred
William Butcher
Darrell Gillman
Teresa Wilhelmsen
Richard Salas
Ben (no last name provided)

