

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
Colorado River Authority of Utah
March 25, 2025 --10:00 a.m. MDT

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

Mr. Shawcroft called the meeting to order at 10:00 am stating there was a quorum. Board members briefly introduced themselves and in person attendees introduced themselves. A list of virtual Attendee names was read aloud by Holly McCall. A list of attendees is included in Attachment I.

2. **Approval of the Minutes – Gene Shawcroft**

Mr. Larsen noted the first sentence of the March 13th Special Meeting Minutes stated the meeting started at 9am when it started at 8am. The minutes were changed to state that the meeting started at 8am. Ms. Hasenyager motioned to approve the January 21, February 13 and March 13 meeting minutes with the correction to the March 13 meeting minutes, Mr. Larsen seconded, and the minutes were 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 2025 annual Utah Water Users Association conference held the previous week in St. George, Utah. Mr. Shawcroft emphasized that hydrologic forecasts predict only a 70% of normal runoff into the Colorado River. Mr. Shawcroft explained that from December 2024 through March 2025 the most probable Lake Powell inflow forecast decreased by approximately 2 million acre-feet and that with the tier structure of the 2007 Interim Guidelines a small change in the hydrologic forecast can have a large impact on potential Lake Powell releases. Mr. Shawcroft stated the Bureau of Reclamation has released an Alternatives Report (five alternatives) through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Mr. Shawcroft explained the Seven Basin States have been meeting every two weeks, meeting most recently Friday, March 21, 2025, in Los Angeles, California. In the Los Angeles meeting the Lower-Division States provided information with limited detail and expressed concerns about the Upper-Division States' proposal, so the meeting ended early. Mr. Shawcroft stated the next Basin States meeting will be held on April 11, 2025, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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

Ms. Haas discussed the Utah Demand Management Pilot Program (DMPP) Projects noting the Board previously approved four pilot projects at a Special Board Meeting on March 13, 2025, to test temporary, voluntary, compensated demand management activities in 2025 and 2026 involving temporary fallowing and storage forbearance. Ms. Haas stated two of four expected water right change applications have been filed with Utah Division of Water Rights, the third water right change application will be filed as early as the day of this Board Meeting, and the fourth water right change application is estimated to be filed within the next week. Ms. Haas explained the Authority's goal is to have Implementation Agreements, including Verification Plans, negotiated and executed in the first part of April to allow conservation activities to begin as soon as possible.

Ms. Haas discussed the Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) Draft Consumptive Use Methods Manual and explained the four Upper Division States are working through the UCRC to develop a standardized set of methods for estimating consumptive uses of different sectors for interstate and Colorado River Compact compliance purposes. Ms. Haas explained that while a remote sensing satellite-based methodology (eeMETRIC) was approved in June 2022 for estimating agricultural consumptive use, methodologies for other sectors like transmountain diversions, reservoir evaporation, and livestock uses are being developed. Ms. Haas explained the UCRC has enlisted the help of the UCRC Engineering Committee, which has significant Utah representation, to review the Draft Consumptive Use Methods Manual. Ms. Haas explained that the Authority has scheduled a meeting with the Utah members of the UCRC Engineering Committee to review and comment on the draft manual to ensure it doesn't conflict with intrastate efforts to estimate water use within Utah.

6. **2025 Utah Legislative Session Outcomes – Cody Stewart, Director of Strategic Engagement**

Mr. Stewart first discussed House Joint Resolution 9, sponsored by Representative Casey Snider, that Mr. Stewart believes was the most relevant legislation to the Authority. Mr. Stewart explained the Joint Resolution acknowledged the Colorado River Compact's historical role, Utah's intent to fully use its allocation, and included "place of use" language asserting Utah's right to use its Colorado River water throughout the state, which was the most controversial language. Mr. Stewart explained the Joint Resolution passed the House unanimously but did not make it to the Senate due to time constraints. Mr. Stewart noted that although the Joint Resolution did not pass, the rejection was based on time and not policy.

Mr. Stewart discussed federal legislation, reminding the Board the Salinity Control Fix Act passed Congress on December 23, 2024, and is in the process of being implemented. Implementation has been slowed due to uncertainty within the current federal administration.

Mr. Stewart discussed the SCPP reauthorization legislation (HR231), which he explained received a hearing in January 2025 and a markup in February 2025 and was sent to the House for consideration, the legislation has not moved in the Senate and has an uncertain future.

Mr. Stewart explained the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Rights Settlement Act has been introduced in the House and Senate and would ratify and fund a significant Tribal water right settlement. Mr. Stewart explained Authority staff has been involved in discussions, and some requested language changes have been made, but "place of use" remains an issue, and the bill faces an uphill climb due to its significant cost and other provisions.

Mr. Stewart stated the federal government is experiencing significant uncertainty and anxiety regarding legislative progress, and Utah and the Authority have a strong federal representation for Colorado River matters with Representative Kennedy on the House Committee on Natural Resources and Senator Lee as the Chair of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

7. **Quarterly Budget Update – Logan Anderson, Manager of Finance & Administration**
Mr. Anderson discussed the percent expended for the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget that ends June 30, 2025. Mr. Anderson explained that personnel services were 62% expended, travel was 46% expended, and current expenses, which includes contracts, attorney general fees, and the office lease are 36% expended. Approximately \$1.7 million remains in projected contract payouts for FY25. Mr. Anderson explained that approximately \$1.5 million is allocated to Utah Demand Management Pilot Program for FY25 and that the projections for current expenses and the DMPP allocation bring the total projected expenditure close to, and below, the FY25 total budget of \$5.7 million.

8. **Hydrology and System Status Update – Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer & Marc Stilson, Principal Engineer**

Ms. Bosworth explained subsurface hydrology current conditions are dry with soil moisture percentiles at or below the 50th percentile across much of the Upper Basin. Ms. Bosworth explained current stream flows are normal to below normal, reflecting dry soil conditions in most areas. Ms. Bosworth explained snow water equivalent in the Upper Colorado River Basin is just below normal for the 2025 water year. Ms. Bosworth stated the day of the Board Meeting was the first flight of the season for the second year of the Flakes, Flights, and Forecasts Airborne Snow Observatories (ASO) Pilot Project, and noted Utah Division of Water Resources planned to have their first ASO flight the following day through the Wings Over Weber Pilot Project. Ms. Bosworth explained the data from these flights would benefit snow water supply forecasting.

Ms. Bosworth explained forecasted snow water equivalent and total precipitation for the remainder of the 2025 water year were both just below normal. Ms. Bosworth explained below-average precipitation and above-average temperatures were anticipated for the following three months, which could impact runoff efficiency due to dry soils and increased evaporation. Ms. Bosworth explained that drought conditions have increased in severity in the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins and within Utah between January and March, 2025.

Mr. Stilson discussed System Operations and Upper Basin Storage, explaining that Lake Powell's storage has declined slightly to 33%, Flaming Gorge is at 85%, Fontenelle is 35%, Morrow Point is 94%, Blue Mesa is 61%, and Navajo is 62% full. Mr. Stilson explained that total system content is just under 24 million acre-feet which is slightly below last year. Mr. Stilson explained the most probable unregulated inflow forecast to Lake Powell is 6.77 million acre-feet, and that expected releases from Lake Powell for the year are projected to be 7.48 million acre-feet placing it in the mid-elevation tier. Mr. Stilson explained Lake Mead is projected to remain in level one shortage condition through the end of 2025 under the most probable forecast.

9. **Remarks from the Board**

Mr. Humphrey stated that runoff in Carbon and Emery Counties will likely be lower than forecasted, the ground is dry, and he is anticipating an average or below-average water year.

Mr. Renstrom reported even drier conditions in the southwest part of Utah but expressed gratitude for recent precipitation.

Mr. Ferry highlighted the large turnout and positive feedback from the Utah Water Users Association Conference in St. George, Utah, and emphasized the critical nature of the hydrologic shortage, noting that reservoir storage only provides a year or two of buffer.

Ms. Hasenyager noted low soil moisture and snowpack in most of the state, except for near-average snow conditions in the northern part of Utah. Ms. Hasenyager explained that the Drought Response Committee decided to wait until April 2025 for more information before any potential state drought declarations. Ms. Hasenyager explained county drought meetings had been held, and county-level drought declaration could open up low-interest loan funding for farms and ranches. Ms. Hasenyager expressed concerns regarding federal funding freezes and travel bans impacting agencies including the United States Geological Survey, the Natural Resources Conservation Service Snow Survey, the National Weather Service, and the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center, which all provide crucial data for water management and drought response in Utah.

Mr. Larsen explained that March 2025 precipitation helped in the Uintah Basin. Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) stations show slightly below normal snow water equivalent, but there is little to no low elevation snow making runoff predictions difficult.

10. **Other Business**

Mr. Shawcroft provided an update on the UCRC Federal Chair and explained that former Chair Anne Castle was asked to step down shortly after the current presidential administration took office and there is no information on a plan to refill the position. Mr. Shawcroft explained the UCRC Vice Chair, Commissioner Rebecca Mitchell from Colorado, is the acting chair and will conduct meetings.

11. **Next Meeting: April 22 1:00pm World Trade Center 1st Floor Conference Room, 60 E South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84111**

12. **Closed Session as needed to discuss interstate claims to 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).**

A motion was made by Mr. Larsen to close the meeting pursuant to Utah Code section 52-4-205 to discuss interstate claims to 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. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hasenyager. Ms. Coleman took a roll call vote from each Board Member; the motion to enter a Closed Session passed unanimously.

13. **Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Larsen and seconded by Ms. Hasenyager. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

March 25, 2025
Colorado River Authority of Utah Board Meeting

Board Member Attendees:

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

Attendees:

Amy Haas, CRAU
Betsy Coleman, CRAU
Lily Bosworth, CRAU
Holly McCall, CRAU
Marc Stilson, CRAU
Logan Anderson, CRAU
Cody Stewart, CRAU
Wendy Crowther, Asst. Attorney General
Edward Mueller, Utah Deputy State Water Agent

Virtual Attendees:

Megan Nelson, The Nature Conservancy
Mike Drake, Division of Water Rights
David Horsley, Division of Water Rights
Troy Ovard, Central Utah Water Conservancy District
Joshua Ward, Bowen Collins and Associates
Tom Bruton, CRAU
Sarah Shechter, Asst. Attorney General