



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES

1944 Water Treaty/Colorado River

On March 20, the U.S. Department of State denied a request from Mexico to deliver its Colorado River water to Tijuana through a special connection in San Diego. Under normal conditions the water is diverted from the Morelos Dam on the U.S.-Mexico border and delivered through Baja California's Colorado River-Tijuana Aqueduct. Under emergency conditions, the U.S. has customarily allowed Mexico to pay the associated costs of moving water from Parker Dam on the Arizona-California border to receive its customary Tijuana supply of Colorado River water. In a statement posted to social media, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs stated: "Mexico's continued shortfalls in its water deliveries under the 1944 water-sharing treaty are decimating American agriculture—particularly farmers in the Rio Grande valley. As a result, today for the first time, the U.S. will deny Mexico's non-treaty request for a special delivery channel for Colorado River water to be delivered to Tijuana." <https://x.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1902788643284021300>

At a press conference, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said the issue was being addressed by the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) and Mexico's national water utility, Conagua. "There has been less water. This is part of the problem and that's why this is important." Rep. Monica De La Cruz (R-TX) said, "Mexico owes the Rio Grande Valley farmers more than one million acre-feet of water. It is unacceptable and unfair to send our water resources to help Mexican farmers while they refuse to comply in sending us water for our South Texas farmers. This is a critical step in the right direction. I am encouraged to see a White House and a President who cares about South Texas and is willing to fight for our local farmers and communities."

USDA/Texas/Rio Grande

On March 20, Rep. De La Cruz (R-TX) and Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) joined Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins to announce \$280M in grant funding to support Rio Grande Valley agricultural producers amid water shortages due to Mexico's shortfalls in 1944 Water

Treaty deliveries. The funds, signed into law as part of December's continuing resolution (H.R.10545), will be dispersed through a block grant to the Texas Department of Agriculture. Sen. Cruz expressed his belief that, under the new Administration, Texas will receive its 1944 Treaty water: "Mexico is going to comply. Ignoring the treaty will no longer be an option for Mexico." Rep. De La Cruz said the delivery shortfall has been devastating for farmers and ranchers. "We've lost our sugar mill and we are on the verge of losing our citrus industry as well." Del Cruz emphasized the importance of Mexico's treaty obligations, stating that the 1.3 million acre-feet owed is enough to supply the city of Houston with water for three years. See WSW #2424.

CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES

House Transportation and Infrastructure

On April 1, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved H.R. 1948, introduced by Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) which would authorize the IBWC to accept funding from federal and non-federal entities for wastewater treatment, flood control projects, or other water conservation efforts. Currently, the IBWC is almost solely reliant upon annual appropriations from Congress or emergency funding to build and maintain its facilities. Rep. Peters, alongside past and present California congressional lawmakers have secured a total of \$650M for IBWC through various bills, enough to fully repair and expand the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (WSW #2519, #2533). Rep. Peters said: "Additional funding pathways for the IBWC provides the flexibility we need to better invest in the long-term health and well-being of our region."

NOAA

On April 3, Representatives Jared Moskowitz (D-FL) and Eric Sorensen (D-IL) led a 25-member letter urging the Administration to reinstate laid-off National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and National Weather Service (NWS) Employees. In their letter to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the General Services Administration (GSA), lawmakers noted the importance of NWS and NOAA in preparing for extreme weather events: "These agencies provide critical

forecasting that supports emergency response efforts, saves lives, and mitigates damage during severe weather events.... These cuts leave emergency responders and residents with less time to act, putting more people at risk of injury and even death.” Weakening NOAA and NWS, they said, will not save money: “It will result in higher disaster recovery costs, increased insurance premiums, and preventable economic losses.” They requested the decision be immediately reconsidered. <https://moskowitz.house.gov/posts/noaa-nws-letter-moskowitz-sorensen>

On April 2, the House Natural Resources Committee Democrats hosted an “issues forum” on recent staff reductions and facility closures at NOAA. Representative Seth Magaziner (D-RI) led a panel discussion highlighting the critical functions of NOAA in weather forecasting, climate monitoring, fisheries management, and national security. Rep. Magaziner said: “We cannot allow this purge to go unchallenged. We.... have sent letters to NOAA asking for more information and a briefing. We have urged Chairman Westerman to conduct bipartisan oversight. We have proposed amendments to legislation so that our committee’s oversight plan would include an understanding of the impact of the gutting of NOAA. So far Republicans in Congress and the Administration have refused all of our requests.”

Representative Melanie Stansbury (D-NM), a former nonpartisan employee at OMB where she worked on earth science systems, said “I think that what this administration does not seem to understand is that science is the foundation of how we understand the world, make predictions, and actually manage everything from the private sectors to our responses to things like natural disasters and fires.... These efforts to privatize these programs have been looked at many many times. In fact, when I got to OMB there had been decades of efforts to potentially privatize the earth observing satellite programs at both the Department of Interior and the Weather Service, and guess what: Administration after Administration found out that the public interest and usage of that data was so crucial that you could not turn it over to the private sector. Because if it failed there would be catastrophic impacts for everything, because we use that data for everything.”

WATER RESOURCES

Drought/Snow/Water Supply Outlook

On April 3, NOAA’s National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) released a new Snow Drought Update highlighting a spring heat wave impacting snowpack across the West. In the Northern Rockies, snowpack is generally near-to-above median, with isolated snow drought in northwestern Montana. In

the Central Rockies, snow drought conditions are more widespread. The worst conditions are in southwestern Utah and southern Colorado, with some stations reporting record-low Snow Water Equivalent (SWE). In southwestern Utah, most stations report less than 50% of median SWE, and the Lower Colorado-Lake Mead Basin is at 46%. The Upper Colorado-Dirty Devil River Basin is at 65% of median SWE. In southern Colorado, the Upper San Juan Basin is at 61% of median SWE and the Rio Grande Headwaters Basin is at 62% of median SWE.

Water year precipitation remains much below average for all of Arizona. Nearly all stations in Arizona and New Mexico report less than 50% of median SWE. The Upper Rio Grande Basin reports the lowest SWE on record (since 1981) at 32% of median. The Rio Grande-Elephant Butte Basin is also at the lowest on record, 14% of median. Oregon and Washington are experiencing mixed conditions with generally below median SWE in the northern Cascade Range and near median in the central cascade range. Elsewhere in Oregon and Washington, snowpack is generally above median.

In California and Nevada, snowpack conditions vary significantly by region with the southern Cascade Range in northern California, and north of Highway 50 in Nevada, snowpack is generally much above median. Across much of the central and southern Sierra Nevada, snowpack is near to slightly below median. On the west slope of the Sierra Nevada, the Lower Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Tulare-Buena Vista Lakes Basins are at 98%, 89%, and 88% of median SWE, respectively. On the east slope, the Truckee, Carson, and Walker Basins are at 96%, 91%, and 92% of median SWE, respectively. Snowpack in southcentral Alaska is much below median at lower elevations, while higher-elevation stations report near to above median snowpack. The Kenai Peninsula (70%), Prince William Sound (73%), and Knik Arm (79%) HUC 6 basins have below-median SWE.

PEOPLE

Governor Greg Abbott (R-TX) has appointed **Brooke Paup**, Chairman of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, as Texas’ WSWC member state representative and Executive Committee member. **L’Oreal Stepney**, Texas Water Development Board Chair, has been appointed as a member.

Governor Kelly Armstrong (R-ND) has appointed North Dakota Department of Water Resources Director **Reice Haase** as a member. We welcome and look forward to working with each of them.

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is a government entity of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.