

**ANNUAL REPORT
ON THE
COLORADO RIVER BASIN
SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM**

2010

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

December 31, 2010

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BACKGROUND

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council (Council) was established pursuant to Section 204 of Public Law 93-320, the "Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974" (Act). Amendments to the Act in 2008 created the Basin States Program (BSP) and redefined and increased the consultation responsibilities of the Advisory Council. The Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) originally approved a charter for the Council on February 6, 1976. During 2010, the Charter was revised and it reflects the Legislative changes that occurred to the Salinity Control Program(Program), as authorized by the amended Public Law 93-320, in 2008. A copy of the current Advisory Council Charter is included as Attachment A.

The Council consists of up to three members from each of the seven Colorado River Basin States. Governors of their respective states appoint the members. The Council membership as of December 31, 2010 is listed in Attachment B.

Many of the Advisory Council members are members of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum). The Forum is an organization created in 1973 by the seven Colorado River Basin States for the purpose of interstate cooperation and to provide the states with the information necessary to comply with the Water Quality Standards for the Colorado River and Section 303 of the Clean Water Act.

This report provides annual recommendations to the federal agencies concerning the progress of the Program and the need for specific actions by involved federal agencies. This report comments on the actions taken by the federal agencies through December 31, 2010.

The report does not attempt to fully describe or analyze the Program. Readers unfamiliar with the Salinity Control Program should refer to *Quality of Water, Colorado River Basin, Progress Report No. 22, January 2005* (USBR), and the *2008 Review, Water Quality Standards for Salinity, Colorado River System, October 2008* (2008 Review) for a full discussion of the Program. The first report is available at www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/ or by contacting Kib Jacobson, the Salinity Control Program Manager for the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The second report is available at <http://www.ColoradoRiverSalinity.org> or by contacting Don A. Barnett, the Executive Director for

the Forum. The addresses and phone numbers for Reclamation and the Forum are provided at the beginning of this report.

The Council met twice in 2010. The first meeting was held on June 4th in Cheyenne, WY. At that meeting the Advisory Council discussed the Federal agencies' responses to the 2009 Advisory Council Report. It also heard a report and recommendation from its Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on the use of cost sharing funds under the BSP. The Council accepted the TAG's recommendations and the Council made those recommendations to Reclamation. The Council also heard reports from Reclamation on current activities under the Parallel Program and future activities under the newly created BSP. The second meeting was held on November 18th and 19th in San Diego, CA. At that meeting, the Council received summary reports from, and made inquiries of, the federal agencies involved in salinity control, continued to discuss the BSP and approved the budget recommendations contained in this report.

Prior to the meeting, to facilitate discussion, Council members received written summaries from the federal agencies detailing their accomplishments for the year. The Council recognizes the summaries are not explicitly required; however, the Council appreciates the agencies' preparation and transmittal of these summaries in advance of the Council meetings. They provide a valuable basis for more complete and focused discussions on the progress and needs of the Program. The Council recognizes these summaries describe the status of ongoing activities and, therefore, are not official agency reports as they contain, in some instances, incomplete data sets and preliminary statistics.

Also included in this report as Attachment C are the federal responses to the 2009 Advisory Council Report.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General Issues

The Council is pleased with the general direction the Program is going. The Federal agencies, with Reclamation as the lead agency, are working together in coordination with the Advisory Council, the TAG, the Forum and the Forum's Work Group (Work Group) to ensure salt is being removed from the Colorado River in a cost effective manner.

The Council continues to be concerned about the uncertainties surrounding the Paradox Valley Unit in Colorado. The Council has received reports from Reclamation that the well head pressure continues to rise. The Paradox Valley Unit removes approximately 10% of the total salt being removed by the Program. Recognizing that the current well has a finite useful life, the Council believes it imperative that studies begin now seeking alternatives to the existing well. The Council encourages all the federal agencies to work under Reclamation's leadership and in cooperation with the Work Group to develop a plan to evaluate and select potential salt removal alternatives for the Paradox Valley Unit. As part of this effort, the plan should include a demonstration evaporation pond. This demonstration evaporation pond could provide useful information for evaluation and design of a larger permanent evaporation pond alternative. Concurrent with this effort, Reclamation should evaluate what options are available if the current well had a long-term emergency shutdown. The Council encourages Reclamation to continue to work with the Council to develop opportunities for funding the above-mentioned studies and strategies for funding the longer-term alternatives.

The Council continues to monitor the progress of the Basin States, the Federal Government and the Government of Mexico as they discuss water deliveries to Mexico to ensure that the states' ability to maintain the salinity standards for the Colorado River are not impacted. The Council requests that Reclamation and the International Boundary and Water Commission provide reports on these issues to the Forum.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The Council is pleased that NRCS continues to allocate EQIP funds to its salinity control activities in the Basin. The Council is supportive of NRCS's efforts to scale back its activities in the Grand Valley Salinity Control Project area. The Council agrees that the efforts in this area should be viewed as a salinity control success. In the early days of the Program, Grand Valley was a hard sell, but once the Program was up and running, it became very popular. The Council encourages NRCS that as it implements its wrap-up strategy, it includes future monitoring and reporting and continued support for the local producers. The Council looks forward to hearing reports on how the wrap-up is progressing.

The Council urges NRCS to look for ways to best allocate all of the funds available to it for salinity control so that the greatest cost-effective salt control can be realized. This could include the use of funds in new areas and smaller areas as supported by the Forum through the use of the SPARROW model. It could include the refocusing of advanced efforts so that more producers might choose to participate in areas such as the Lower Gunnison.

In the Management and Budget Recommendations portion of this report, the Council recommends that funding for the USDA portion of the federal program be in accordance with Table 1 of this report.

The Council requests a written response from the USDA to recommendations contained in this report by **April 30, 2011**. This response should include comment on statements made in this section of this report and also on comments found in this report under the headings of General Issues, and Management and Budget Recommendations.

U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts in securing and expending funds for salinity control under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The Council has continually recommended that Reclamation fund its portion of the Program at a higher level. Last year was a good example of how much additional cost-effective salinity control could be achieved with additional funding. The Council wants to add its praise to compliments already received by Reclamation as to the effective way the Reclamation staff was able to use ARRA funds.

The Council appreciates the effort Reclamation has taken to provide a smooth transition between the Parallel Program and the BSP and would encourage Reclamation to keep working with the TAG and the Work Group to ensure this continues. The Council also appreciates the effort of the Upper Colorado Regional Office in developing the Council's latest Charter; however, the Council believes that greater participation by the Council in any future review or revisions would be beneficial.

The Council finds that planning studies made in earlier decades were most valuable as the Program began, but much has been accomplished since those studies were completed. The Council believes that new and focused planning efforts could help better define and fund work remaining to be done in those areas. The Council believes that the Lower Gunnison area and the Uinta Basin area are in most need of these studies. The Council urges Reclamation to promptly begin these two studies and that these studies should be completed in the near future, for these documents may become guidance documents of significant value. Use of BSP funds for this purpose is acceptable to the Council.

As indicated in the General Issues section, the Council very strongly believes that Reclamation should take the lead in finding alternatives to the existing well at Paradox. Currently, the Paradox Valley Unit intercepts and removes some extremely saline water. If this water were allowed back into the Dolores River, there would be a huge negative impact to the Program and major economic damages would be felt downstream. Locally, the Dolores River would be devastated. This unit is critical to meeting the overall goals of the Program. As such, the Council stands ready to work with Reclamation and develop strategies to fund future salinity control in this valley. The Council would support requests for additional funding for studies. The Council would also encourage Reclamation to investigate the reprogramming of other available Reclamation funds to ensure that the

appropriate studies are completed and available to make timely decisions on the future direction of this unit. The Council encourages Reclamation to continue to work with the Work Group as it moves forward developing studies and analyzing future opportunities. The Council requests that Reclamation consider this a most urgent recommendation both as to timing and potential impact.

In the Management and Budget Recommendations portion of this report, the Council requests that Reclamation seek increased appropriations in FY 2011, FY 2012 and FY 2013 in accordance with Table 1 herein. Reclamation is requested to give a detailed report on its efforts to secure additional funding at the next Council meeting.

The Council asks Reclamation to respond in writing to recommendations contained in this report by **April 30, 2011**. This response should address the Council's statements made in this section of this report and also comments found under the headings of General Issues, and Management and Budget Recommendations.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Council has in the past urged BLM to take its limited salinity control funds and disperse them in such a way as to encourage research and implementation over a wide geography. BLM has effectively done this. The Council now encourages BLM to begin using tools which have been developed to start implementing programs which will result in salt retention on a much larger scale on BLM lands. Salinity control on public lands could be one of the most cost-effective ways of providing salinity control for the Basin. More focused funding will be needed to accomplish this, and monitoring would be very important to document the salt control.

In the Management and Budget Recommendations portion of this report, the Council recommends that BLM seek funding of \$5,200,000 to be used by BLM on activities that do, in part, control salinity in the Colorado River Basin (see Table 1). Potential activities that are directly focused on salinity control have been identified by BLM staff which could readily utilize \$1.5 million in FY 2011. About 65% is identified for implementation of on-the-ground projects. The Council recommends that the \$1.5 million be designated from the BLM on-going budget for direct salinity control work. The Council also recommends that sufficient funding from Land Resources Subactivity Soil, Water, and Air Management be used for monitoring and maintenance of implemented projects.

The Council requests a written report responding to each of the above recommendations herein by **April 30, 2011**. This response should include comments on statements made in this section of this

report and also on comments found under the headings of General Issues, and Management and Budget Recommendations.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

The Council appreciates USGS's efforts. USGS has brought a science-based approach to the development and analysis of projects. The Council urges USGS to continue to work with Reclamation to ensure that the data collected is accurate, to identify any difference or discrepancies in that data and to resolve those errors.

The Council wants to cite the USGS's effort to bring forth a working SPARROW model as an example of how a science-based approach can bring a tool to the Program management decisions. The work the USGS is doing in Paradox is the second of many examples that could be named as ongoing science work providing information needed for wise management decisions. The results of the work in recent years of the USGS using Basin Funds to better define the hydro-salinity characteristics of the Lower Gunnison River system will soon allow Program managers to make better-reasoned decisions in this area.

The Council requests the USGS assess and report to the Council on its continued ability to perform these important functions by **April 30, 2011**.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The Council is pleased with the cooperation and enhanced communication observed in recent years between the USFWS and federal Program implementing agencies. The Council encourages USFWS to work with Reclamation and the States as they pursue Paradox Valley Unit alternatives, such as evaporation ponds.

The Council requests a written report responding to the above recommendations by **April 30, 2011**.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The funding level recommendations contained in this report are consistent with and support the conclusions regarding the funding required to accomplish the Plan of Implementation (Plan) adopted by the Forum as part of its 2008 Review. The Program includes a significant amount of non-federal cost sharing. The States provide, in total, 30% cost share for the Program from the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund and Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund. The States are currently the second largest contributor to the program behind the USDA. In addition to the States= cost share, the local farmers cost share in the USDA on-farm program. The non-federal participants (the states, landowners, irrigation districts, etc.) are ready in FY 2011 to contribute their share of the Program costs as up-front payments. The Council continues to be pleased with the funding made available to the USDA as authorized by the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. The Council continues to be concerned that ongoing Reclamation funding is lagging behind the USDA funding in geographic areas where coordinated implementation is essential. The Council does recognize that for one year the use of ARRA funds raised Reclamation's spending to an acceptable level. The potential impact of a Program lag is a slowed down, less cost-effective Program. The Council urges Reclamation to vigorously pursue adequate funding so as to allow timely implementation of its portion of the Program.

Separate and apart from the funding increase the Council believes Reclamation should seek for the ongoing Program is the need for funds for planning related to the future of the Paradox Valley Unit. Funds are also needed now for investigation studies so that a better understanding of this high salinity source can be used to aid in wise future management decisions. Funds are also needed for the necessary planning efforts identified in this report which should include funds for demonstration efforts where needed, such as evaporation pond studies. Long-term planning strategies need to be considered for funding future construction needed for the Paradox Valley Unit. Reclamation should consider if construction funding should be included now in their out-year budget requests.

The Council is encouraged by the BLM efforts in the Basin and recommends that, absent receiving the full funding contained in Table 1 for BLM, BLM make available to the Program \$1.5 million to fund on-the-ground salinity control measures. The Council stands ready to assist BLM in achieving this funding goal.

Table 1 contains the Council=s recommendations for federal cost share for FY 2011 and FY 2012. These funds are for the construction activities necessary to meet the Program objectives as set forth in the Plan. The Forum has acted to formally support this level of funding and plans to transmit these recommendations to the Congress. The Forum has expressed its intentions to actively seek the Congressional support necessary to maintain adequate funding for the Program. The Council wishes to emphasize that funding delays and funding in lesser amounts will render the Program unable to meet the Plan objectives, as measured in tons of salt-loading reduction. Reclamation has identified that its current level of funding will not allow it to construct salinity control at the level set forth in the approved Plan.

As indicated in Table 1, the funding recommendations therein are for the federal portion of project implementation costs only. The Council also urges the agencies to provide adequate funding to support operation and maintenance, technical and education assistance, monitoring and evaluation of implemented projects and planning for future projects. The Council recommends funds for these activities be provided in addition to the funds recommended in Table 1. The Council requests that in their responses federal agencies specifically comment on funding for these non-construction activities.

Table 1

FEDERAL FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

	Fiscal Years			
	2011	2012	2013	2014
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR				
Bureau of Reclamation ^{1,2}	\$17,500,000	\$17,500,000	\$17,500,000	\$17,500,000
Bureau of Land Management ³	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	not less than \$20,000,000 ⁴	not less than \$20,000,000 ⁴	not less than \$20,000,000 ⁴	not less than \$20,000,000 ⁴

Notes:

- ¹ The Council anticipates and requests that Reclamation budget sufficient funds for required operation and maintenance of constructed units and for plan formulation.
- ² Funding recommendations in Table 1 do not include funds recommended for studies and future implementation at the Paradox Unit. The Council needs the assistance of Reclamation to determine the level of funding needed to support the Paradox Unit.
- ³ The Council anticipates and requests that BLM budget sufficient funds for inventory and ranking, planning, maintenance, monitoring, evaluation, and support.
- ⁴ If the FY2010 funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) allotment equals \$1.2 billion, the recommendation would equal \$30 million; if the FY 2010 EQIP allotment equals \$1.3 billion, the recommendation would equal \$32.5 million.

CONCLUSION

The Council recognizes and appreciates its responsibility to submit comments and recommendations on salinity control activities to the federal agencies. As indicated in the General Comments section, the Council is pleased with the agency efforts put forth in 2010 and looks forward to providing a framework for future coordination and consultation. The Council requests that written responses to this year's report be provided by **April 30, 2011**. Responses should be sent to the Advisory Council Chairman, Dennis Strong, at the following address:

Dennis J. Strong, Director
Utah Division of Water Resources
1594 West North Temple, Suite 310
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

It would be appreciated if copies of the responses are sent to Reclamation's Salinity Control Program Manager, Kib Jacobson, and the Forum's Executive Director, Don Barnett, at the following addresses:

Kib Jacobson, Designated Federal Official
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
125 S. State Street, Room 7311
Salt Lake City, UT 84138-1102

Don A. Barnett, Executive Director
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum
106 West 500 South, Suite 101
Bountiful, UT 84010

Attachment A

Advisory Council Charter

Attachment B

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP December 31, 2010

ARIZONA

Perri Benemelis
Phoenix, Arizona

Larry R. Dozier
Phoenix, Arizona

Linda Taunt
Phoenix, Arizona

NEVADA

Leo M. Drozdoff
Carson City, Nevada

McClain Peterson
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UTAH

Dennis J. Strong
Salt Lake City, Utah

John Whitehead
Salt Lake City, Utah

Randy Crozier
Roosevelt, Utah

CALIFORNIA

Gerald R. Zimmerman
Glendale, California

Dorothy Rice
Sacramento, California

NEW MEXICO

John R. D=Antonio Jr.
Santa Fe, New Mexico

WYOMING

Dan S. Budd
Big Piney, Wyoming

Patrick T. Tyrrell
Cheyenne, Wyoming

COLORADO

David W. Robbins
Denver, Colorado

Jennifer L. Gimbel
Denver, Colorado

Steven H. Gunderson
Denver, Colorado

John F. Wagner
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Attachment C

Federal Responses to the 2009 Advisory Council Report