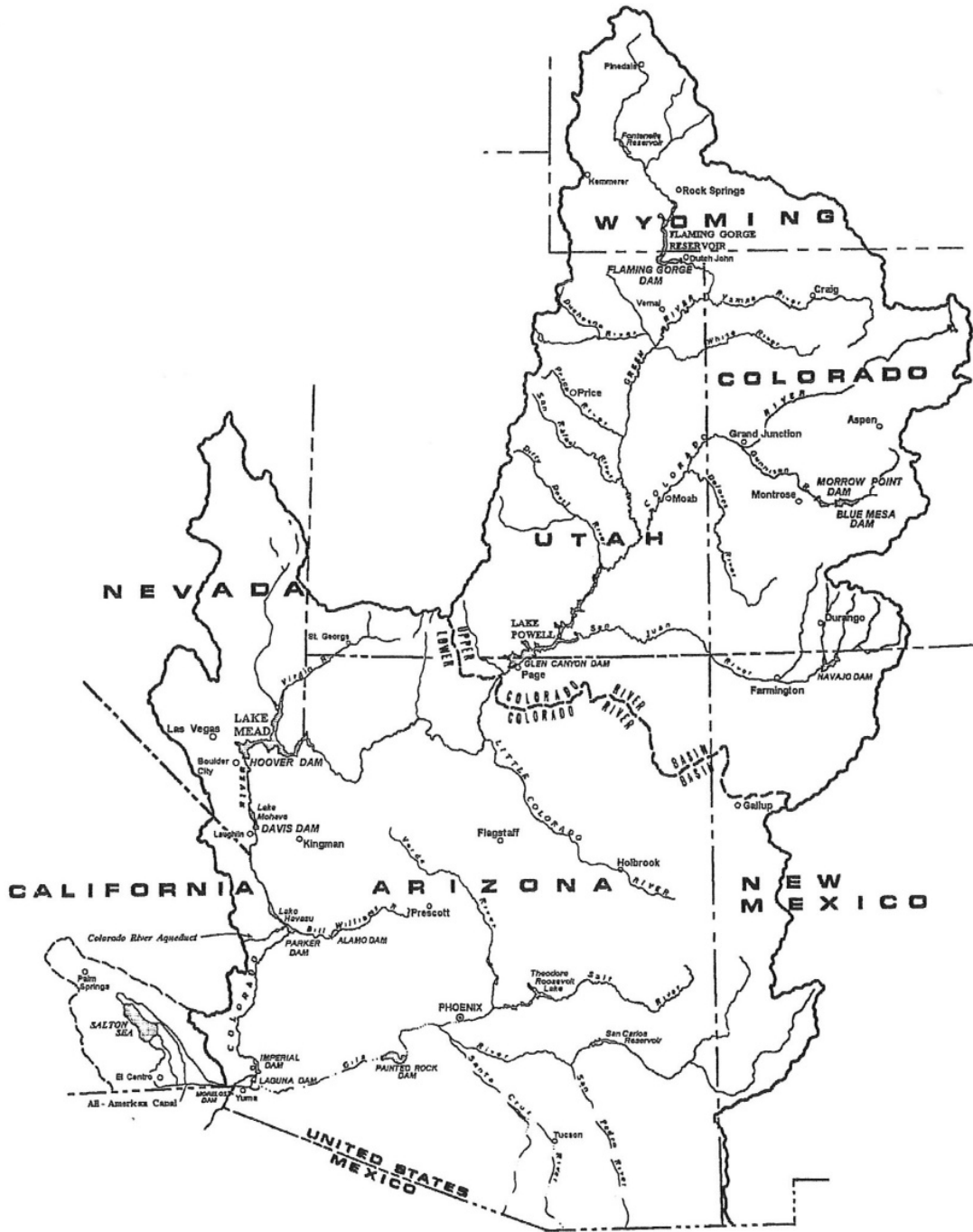


**ANNUAL REPORT
ON THE
COLORADO RIVER BASIN
SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM**

2015



**COLORADO RIVER BASIN
SALINITY CONTROL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

December 31, 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
Background	1
Council Comments and Recommendations	3
General Subjects.....	3
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	5
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	5
Agricultural Research Service (ARS)	7
U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).....	8
Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)	8
Bureau of Land Management (BLM).....	11
U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)	14
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).....	15
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).....	17
International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC)	18
Management and Budget Recommendations	19
U.S. Department of the Interior	20
Basinwide Program (Reclamation)	20
Bureau of Land Management.....	21
U.S. Department of Agriculture	22
EQIP (NRCS)	22
Conclusion	25

Tables

1 – Funding Recommendations – Department of the Interior	24
2 – Funding Recommendations – EQIP	24

Attachments

- A – Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council Charter
- B – Advisory Council Membership as of December 31, 2015
- C – Federal Responses to the 2014 Advisory Council Report

BACKGROUND

Title II of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (Act) (Public Law 93-320) created the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Program), and Section 204 of the Act created the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council (Council). With the 2008 amendments to the Act that created the Basin States Program (BSP), the Council's consultation responsibilities have been redefined and clearly stated. The Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) originally approved a charter for the Council on February 6, 1976. In 2010, the Charter was revised to better reflect the Legislative changes that occurred to the Program in 2008. The Charter was renewed in 2014 and will need to be renewed again this year. A copy of the current 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 Council members. The Council membership list as of December 31, 2014 is included as Attachment B. The Council has created a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that it uses to provide analyses and recommendations. The TAG includes one member from each state. Its chair is appointed by the Council's Chair.

All of the Council members at this time are also 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 Salinity on the Colorado River and Section 303 of the Clean Water Act. The Forum, like the Council, has an advisory and analytical group which is named the Forum's Work Group (Work Group).

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, 2015.

The report does not attempt to fully describe or analyze the Program. Readers unfamiliar with the Program should refer to *Quality of Water, Colorado River Basin, Progress Report No. 24, 2013*, and the *2014 Review, Water Quality Standards for Salinity, Colorado River System, October 2014 (2014 Review)* for a discussion of the Program. The first report is available at www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/pdfs/PR24final.pdf or by contacting Kib Jacobson, Program Manager for the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) portion of the Program. The second report is available at 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 end of this report.

The Council met twice in 2015. The first meeting was held on May 20-21 in Salt Lake City, Utah. At that meeting the Council heard summaries of activities and discussed the federal agencies' responses to the 2014 Advisory Council Report. The Council provided the federal agencies the opportunity to report orally and to explain their responses to the 2014 Advisory Council Report. Included in this report as Attachment C are the federal written responses to the 2014 Advisory Council Report. The second meeting was held on October 28-29 in Tucson, Arizona. At this meeting the Council heard reports from the federal agencies on implementation of the Program during FY-2015 and discussed the substance of this report. The Council appreciates the efforts of the federal agencies to summarize Program accomplishments into a timely, informative and concise Federal Accomplishments Report which was reviewed and discussed at the meetings.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL SUBJECTS

The Council continues to be pleased with the direction of the Program and the way the federal agencies are working together and coordinating with the Forum, the TAG and the Work Group. The importance of this joint effort is magnified as Reclamation evaluates replacement alternatives to the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) during its current EIS effort. The Council finds that securing the continued future effectiveness of the PVU is a most critical issue. It is most important that all involved Department of the Interior agencies consider the Paradox replacement alternative effort as a Department-wide effort and that BLM, USFWS and USGS become partners in moving the project ahead. Each of these three agencies has an important role to play and Reclamation has worked hard at securing this coordination, assistance and support. It is apparent that the assistance and support will be most important as the EIS process proceeds.

The Council is also pleased with BLM's continuing effort to study and understand salt mobilization processes on rangelands. The Council encourages all federal agencies involved in these efforts to continue to work cooperatively to find answers to the salt loading which occurs from these federally administered lands. The Council is committed to work with Reclamation, BLM and ARS to pursue opportunities to fund these efforts. With significant seed moneys for these efforts having come from the limited Basin States Program, the Council is hopeful that BLM and ARS will now lead out in these efforts both monetarily and in executing the needed studies.

The Council also appreciates the efforts of the Science Team in providing the TAG and the Work Group valuable analysis of various issues facing the Program and reviewing potential study efforts. The Council recommends that this support continue.

The Council and the Forum continue to develop opportunities to ensure that adequate up-front cost sharing is available to match the federal expenditures for the

Program. The Council appreciates Reclamation's extra efforts in working through the short-term management of the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund. The Council encourages all the federal agencies to work with the Forum on this effort as appropriate.

As a final general item, the timing of the renewal of the Charter has been problematic in past years as it has fallen coincident with the Council's fall meetings which made it difficult to commit to meeting and travel arrangements when the Charter hadn't yet been signed by all three sponsoring agencies. The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts two years ago to move the period for renewal forward and herein requests that the Department of Agriculture and EPA also assist this year such that the Charter is renewed this July.

The below paragraphs provide specific comments and recommendations to the federal agencies involved in the implementation of the Salinity Control Program.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Council recognizes the key and essential role that NRCS has played in reducing the salt load of the Colorado River for the benefit of downstream agricultural and municipal users. Providing these benefits has resulted from a coordinated effort between the three state NRCS offices in the Upper Basin and also the cooperation they have provided when working with other federal agencies, the TAG and the Work Group. The Council recognizes the improvements in the implementation of NRCS's program that have been realized through the efforts of NRCS individuals involved in the Program. The Council has observed that the role of informed and participating State Conservationists is most important with respect to the success of the Program and expresses its appreciation to these dedicated individuals.

The Council believes that the efforts of NRCS's Salinity Control Program Coordinator have also been critical to this success. The Council sees an absolute need to continue this position and requests that it always be filled with a motivated and well qualified individual. The NRCS has many dedicated employees who have worked hard to accomplish irrigation improvements and advance the purposes of the Program. Recently, two well-seasoned individuals who have provided key engineering and technical support in Colorado and Utah have retired. These individuals also authored the annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports. These vacant positions have not been filled, and the Council urges NRCS to address these important reporting functions and responsibilities.

The three State Conservationists, working together, prepare a three-year funding plan for the salinity control implementation and submit that plan to headquarters. The Council has found that significant effort and good thought has gone into this plan. It is a realistic determination of what might be accomplished each of the next three years with adequate funding. Each year the Council reviews and has supported the three-year funding plans. It was concerning to the Council to find that fewer funds were allocated than were requested in FY 2015. The amount of \$13.9 million in EQIP FA funding was requested and

only \$12.1 million was allocated. Even more concerning is the 2016 allocation of \$10 million versus the \$14.3 million identified in the three-year funding plan and requested by the Council. The Council requests an explanation as to why this occurred and requests that funding allocations be consistent with the three-year plan occur in 2017. For every dollar of EQIP funds allocated, an additional \$.43 is added to the Program as cost-share from Basin Funds. Without the federal expenditure, these funds are not available. These Basin States Program funds are used for additional on-farm contracts and for many other purposes, including the support of NRCS staff.

The Council knows that CTA funding is most important when producers first contact NRCS about their involvement in the salinity program. The Council appreciates the use of these funds in the past and urges that adequate funding be made available in the future.

The Council recognizes the interplay between broad policy efforts and actual implementation of contracts by those in the field and the importance of organizing and coordinating the offices of area conservationists and district conservationists in such a way that the efficient implementation of the Program will continue and requests that NRCS make every effort to assure that each of these offices is adequately staffed. The Council also recommends that NRCS pursue salinity control in established salinity control areas before going to other parts of the Basin to expend salinity EQIP funds.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Reports prepared each year are most helpful, and the Council applauds the involved NRCS staff for this effort. The Council urges that this work continue and notes that retired NRCS engineers will be much missed for their good work in this effort.

In the future, the Salinity Control Program may need to turn more and more to grazing lands (rangelands). BLM, ARS and USGS are now engaged in studies, in part funded by Basin States Program funds, to unravel the complex nature of salt loading from grazing lands. NRCS's salinity coordinator has been most helpful as this effort has moved ahead.

NRCS has leading knowledge in some aspects of this complex puzzle. The Council requests that NRCS continue to support this effort in any way it can.

The Council requests a written response from the USDA to recommendations contained in this report by **April 29, 2016**. This response should include comments on statements made in this section of this report and also on recommendations found in this report under the General Issues section and the Management and Budget Recommendations section.

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

The Council has recognized in the past the great efforts of ARS in compiling a far reaching bibliography of past worldwide salinity control efforts. The report is what was requested by the Council. The findings of this very comprehensive effort were disappointing in that it informed us that little helpful literature is available with regard to rangelands and their management and the resulting salt loading to streams. We are learning, as we had suspected, that this is a very complex issue.

ARS is involved, in part with the assistance of Basin States Program funds and funds appropriated to BLM, in new efforts to study and understand salt and sediment transport mechanisms. The Council encourages ARS to continue this analysis with the hope of developing new tools to help manage salinity from rangelands. The Council is pleased with the cooperative nature of these efforts as ARS works closely with BLM and USGS. We encourage this cooperation to continue. BLM manages a very significant part of the saline rangelands in the Colorado River Basin. Through Basin States Program funding, approximately \$1 million has been contributed to this effort. The Council is eager to receive timely reports as to the findings from these investigations. Periodic updates to the Science Team and the Work Group would be appreciated. It would also be helpful if ARS would provide a brief report to the Council on progress, findings and next steps in this effort.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR (DOI)

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

The Council greatly appreciates the efforts of the Upper Colorado Region (UC) office in the continued oversight and coordination of the Program and the priority given the Program from the top down, including the assemblage and support of a capable and dedicated salinity team. The Council also appreciates the effort in the UC Region to address and improve the contracting issues that have faced the Program. Reports from the TAG to the Council have been very positive regarding these efforts and it appears that significant improvement is being made in this area.

The Council appreciates the increased involvement of the Lower Colorado Region (LC) offices. Recognizing the funding issues that are facing the Program and the fact that the LC manages the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund (LCRBDF), the Council finds that the LC's role is critical to the success of the Program. The Forum and Council are dealing with temporarily difficult decisions relative to funding and generation of cost share dollars to the LCRBDF. The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts to work with the Council to manage this fund over the next several years in a way that avoids the LCRBDF going into deficit. The Council encourages Reclamation to continue to work with the Forum and Work Group to study and develop options and project future revenues to the fund.

The Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) issues are of great concern to the Council. In the General Issues section, the Council has expressed its support for the PVU EIS and Alternative Studies efforts and continues to emphasize the need to complete these studies in a timely manner. This should include a fair evaluation of the use of evaporation ponds as a disposal alternative. Reclamation recently provided a revised EIS schedule. The Council urges Reclamation make every effort to meet this schedule. The EIS effort will require adequate funding, and the Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts to secure required funding.

The Council requests that Reclamation not only plan to advance the ongoing EIS efforts for the PVU, but that it also secure the needed funding for the planning, design and implementation of the selected alternative(s) after issuance of the Record of Decision in 2018. The Council also requests that Reclamation work with the states on funding options, including potential phasing for implementation of the selected alternative. The Council also recognizes Reclamation's efforts to develop a contingency plan and road map for placing PVU back into operation as quickly as possible if a shut-down were to occur prior to the implementation of a preferred replacement alternative. The Council requests that Reclamation keep the plan up to date as the EIS and Alternatives Study progresses.

The Council has recently learned that the reduction in salt loading by the past PVU efforts is now in question. USGS has been tasked with getting the answers. The Council urges the prompt resolution of this issue.

Reclamation's efforts, USGS studies and the participation from the Washington County Water Conservancy District have moved the understanding of the salt loading mechanisms at Pah Tempe (La Verkin) Springs ahead to a point where it is clear additional studies may be able to identify if a salinity control project is feasible at this site. The Council urges Reclamation to move ahead with these additional studies. The Council notes that these springs were authorized for study under the original Salinity Control Act. The Council believes that these future efforts are moving ahead under this original authority and that if a project becomes feasible at these springs, implementation and funding of the project would be under the original authority.

The Council notes that the Upper Colorado Region has brought together an effective staff. However, many months ago a key staff engineer accepted an assignment in Washington. That position has not been filled. The Council recommends that this position be promptly filled.

The Council continues to be concerned that we do not have a full understanding and accurate quantification of salinity damages and the economic benefits of the Program. As

the Program moves forward, it is imperative that we have a more accurate quantification of salinity damages and the economic benefits from the Program. This becomes even more critical as additional funding for the PVU alternative is requested. Reclamation has been working with the Work Group to evaluate and revise the economic damages model. The Council recommends that this continue. In October the Council recommended that Reclamation use \$150,000 of Basin States Program dollars to be matched with \$150,000 of appropriated dollars to hire a consultant to update the economic damages model. The Council requests that Reclamation make updating and improving the salinity damages calculations a priority and that this study move forward expeditiously.

In the Management and Budget Recommendations portion of this report, the Council recognizes that it is very difficult, given Reclamation's budget cycle, to make funding recommendations that can influence Reclamation's budget request for the next two fiscal years. The Council recognizes and appreciates Reclamation's efforts which led to an increase in Basinwide Program funding in FY-2016. The Council recommends that Reclamation seek increased appropriations in FY-2017, FY-2018, and FY-2019 in accordance with Table 1. It is noted that the requested amounts have been decreased due to the very cost effective projects selected in the recent FOA. Reclamation is requested to give a detailed report on its efforts to secure additional funding at the next Advisory Council meeting.

The Council has found in the past that, with the exception of contracting issues, the management of the Basinwide Program has been most effective. The Council now notes that much improvement has been made with respect to the timely issuing of contracts. This is much appreciated and is important to the effective implementation of the Program.

The Council has learned of Reclamation's effort to most effectively administer a new FOA process. It is noted that very cost effective projects have been identified and the contracting is now in progress. Much praise should be given the Reclamation staff and the NRCS coordinator for work well done.

Each fall Reclamation seeks input from the involved federal agencies and then prepares a Federal Accomplishments Report (FAR) and sends that report to the Advisory Council before its fall meeting. This is very helpful and the Council urges this report continue.

The Council continues to observe the value of the role played by the Science Team. The Council urges Reclamation to continue to convene and staff the Science Team.

The Council recognizes that among the many things that Reclamation does to move the Program forward is the biennial preparation of Progress Reports and their submittal to Congress. The Council appreciates the value of these reports. The Council requests that these reports be coordinated with the Work Group and the Forum on the consistency of data and requests that Progress Report No. 25 be finalized soon. It also recommends that Reclamation consider posting past reports on its salinity website.

The Council notes that its Charter must be renewed this year. The Council does not anticipate any important changes to the Charter. The Council offers to assist in this effort and requests the Charter be renewed this July and also requests that it be advised if important changes are being proposed.

The Council asks Reclamation to respond in writing to recommendations contained in this report by **April 29, 2016**. This response should include comment on statements made in this section of this report and also on recommendations found in this report under the General Issues section and the Management and Budget Recommendations section.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Council recognizes that when Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior “to develop a comprehensive program for minimizing salt contributions to the Colorado River from lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management,” BLM was given a daunting task. The word “program” means the work would be moving ahead to control salt loads coming from these lands. The instruction is for far more to take place than the mere

creation of plans or reports. Many years have passed since BLM was given this charge and though efforts have occurred, clearly there is not yet a “comprehensive program” in place. However, the Council is encouraged by recent progress made by the agency.

The Council received what it believed was a historic presentation at the Council’s October 2014 meeting made by the Environmental Quality and Protection Division Chief. At that meeting BLM proposed having a line-item BLM salinity control program in its FY-2017 budget. The progress that BLM has made in the many months since that meeting is encouraging, but the proposed program has not been realized. The Council requests that BLM report on its thoughts on the creation of a line-item program or other avenues for creating a “comprehensive program” for salinity reduction.

The Council appreciates BLM’s efforts to create a better understanding of salt mobilization on public lands, including a significant literature review of rangeland salinity control. The Council notes that when the Forum was drafting its 2014 Review, BLM could not provide an accounting of the tons of salt controlled by BLM programs. This has been a continuing challenge. The Council is pleased to hear that BLM is initiating renewed aggressive efforts to identify and implement salinity specific activities in the Colorado River Basin and to account for past and future salinity reductions. There is an important and immediate need for quantifying past net salinity improvements within the Basin. The Council recommends that BLM continue with this effort in coordination with the Work Group so that pertinent information may be used in the future to assist the Program.

How much salt is coming off of the vast open spaces of the Colorado River drainage, how it can be better controlled and how it can be accounted for is not only difficult, but has never been accomplished before in a major river system, and work to accomplish this will truly be historic. This was learned from the major effort where BLM and ARS compiled a major bibliography of works of this nature through the scientific community. The Council urges BLM to continue aggressively working to tackle this issue. The Council has recommended in the past to Reclamation that an important portion of the limited Basin States funds designated for scientific study be spent on this rangeland salinity issue.

Reclamation has moved ahead with the funding of some recommended studies that involve BLM, ARS and USGS (approximately \$1 million in the past few years). The Council is not recommending that additional studies be funded with Basin States Program funds until the results of these already funded efforts are reported.

In the 2015 FAR, BLM reported that \$1,125,000 was spent from their Soil, Water and Air fund to support projects specifically relating to salinity control sub-activities. The Council recognizes that this is an important increase in funding and the Council is most appreciative of this expenditure of funds. The Council also appreciates the report in the FAR as to how these funds were expended in each state. The Council notes a major improvement in the accounting of these expenditures and the results. BLM has indicated that it can now identify more than \$1.5 million that could be expended annually on these types of efforts. The Council urges BLM to allocate \$1.5 million to this effort.

The Council notes improved coordination and involvement within BLM. This includes state/field staff, the salinity coordinator, Denver staff and Washington D.C. staff. This is much appreciated and the Council believes that this expanded involvement has, in part, been the reason for recent BLM accomplishments. Previously, the Council urged that BLM select a salinity coordinator whose assignment would be to work exclusively on Colorado River salinity issues. The Council's vision was that the three implementing agencies, with their coordinators domiciled together, would move ahead as a team through daily interfacing of their coordinators. BLM has a large effort and the Council would request BLM to continually evaluate staffing needs, ensuring that program goals and objectives are addressed and adequately coordinated with the activities of the other federal agencies.

The Council is concerned about the future of the Paradox Valley Unit as administered by Reclamation. Currently Reclamation is involved in an EIS that addresses the future of the project. There are BLM issues to be addressed, particularly with respect to the potential future use of some BLM lands. The Council urges BLM to become very

involved with these issues and facilitate, as a part Interior's team, resolution of a workable brine disposal alternative.

The Council requests a written report responding to each of the Council's recommendations by **April 29, 2016**. This response should include comment on statements made in this section of the report as well as recommendations found in General Subjects section and the Management and Budget Recommendations section.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

The Council, in its past report, expressed concern with the change of assignment with USGS's salinity coordinator. The Council no longer has concerns and appreciates the continued coordination and support of the Program provided by USGS with several individuals involved assisting with science support.

The Council wants to express its appreciation as to how responsive USGS has become in its science role for the Secretary of the Interior in assisting with moving the Salinity Control Program forward. The Council continues to urge USGS to work with Reclamation and the Work Group to ensure that the data collection, interpretation and analysis efforts are accurate, effective and contribute to the overall goal of Program implementation.

The Council is pleased with USGS efforts (and has also contributed significant Basin States Program funds) to evaluate potential salinity control measures at the PVU and encourages USGS to continue those activities. The Council believes the resulting information will be important in evaluating these areas as salinity control projects. The Council notes that USGS is attempting to complete some of its funded efforts to understand and model the hydrology of the Paradox Valley. Issues have recently come to the front as to the total salt reduction in the past by the PVU. Reclamation is now moving ahead with an EIS for the PVU. It is most critical that certain scientific issues being investigated by the USGS be resolved soon. The Council urges USGS to move ahead as expediently as practical.

The Council has given its support to detailed investigative efforts by USGS of the Pah Tempe Springs. Past studies of the USGS have been most helpful and informative. The Council now urges USGS to move ahead with additional study efforts of these springs in cooperation with Reclamation, the Washington County Water Conservancy District and the Work Group.

The Council is eager to learn of the findings of the USGS as to the salinity control accomplished in the Uinta Basin. The Council urges that, as soon as is practical and before publication of findings, the USGS report its findings to the Work Group and the Forum.

The Council also recognizes USGS's role and efforts in understanding salt mobilization on rangelands and requests continued participation by USGS in these efforts. The participation of the USGS in Reclamation's Science Team is essential. The role of USGS in helping to project salinity concentrations into the future is also most important. USGS has been most effective in suggesting how Basin States Program dollars can be best spent on scientific investigations to better understand the hydrosalinity of the river system. The Council appreciates the USGS efforts in these areas and urges the continuation of these efforts.

The Council wishes to thank USGS for the priority it gives to funding the basic stream gaging program on the Colorado River and encourages and supports USGS in their efforts to maintain the 20 gage network.

The Council requests that USGS respond to the Council on its continued ability to perform important data gathering and review functions by **April 29, 2016**.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The Council appreciates USFWS's role in finding, reviewing and supporting viable wildlife replacement projects and the service that USFWS provides in reviewing and tabulating replacement by areas and as requested. The Council recommends that USFWS

continue these activities and proactively assist the other agencies in moving the Program forward.

The Council noted the tables provided by USFWS in the 2015 FAR. The Council found them most helpful and requests that the Council continue to be informed each year in the FAR as to the effectiveness of the wildlife replacement efforts and the current status of those efforts. The Council would also ask that USFWS be proactive in looking for wildlife replacement opportunities which will provide lasting wildlife enhancement and which will fit within the Program opportunities and mandates, including construction of such projects on public lands.

The Council recognizes that USFWS, as an Interior agency, has a vital role in assisting other agencies in implementing the Salinity Control Program and encourages the agency to be collaborative in finding solutions for moving the Program forward and working through the issues, as needed, to continue to implement the Program. This collaborative effort is most needed as Reclamation looks for the best opportunities to control the brine through their PVU project. The Council believes that USFWS should consider itself a part of the Interior team that is charged with finding the best solution to the future of salinity control at the PVU.

The Council requests a written response to the above recommendations by **April 29, 2016**.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

The Council is pleased that EPA determined that the Colorado River salinity coordinating region will be Region 8. The Council also notes that the past salinity coordinator, whose efforts were most appreciated, has retired, but that the transition to a new coordinator has been very effective. The Council asks for the continued support of EPA as the individual states forward their standards for approval, as has been done in the past. The Council also appreciates the updates given each year in the FAR as to the involvement in water quality control by the Tribes in the Colorado River Basin.

As part of its 2017 Triennial Review efforts, the Forum has created a committee to examine its policies relative to the issuing of NPDES permits. EPA has volunteered to participate with this committee, which participation will be most appreciated.

The Council continues to encourage EPA's assistance at the PVU, including fast tracking of a UIC permit, if needed, as well as continuing to participate in the review of all alternatives in the EIS process. The Council has found that Region 8 of the EPA has been most responsive to issues it has been asked to address. The timely preparation of a well prepared EIS by Reclamation for the Paradox Valley Unit is one of the top priorities of the Council.

The Council would appreciate a response to the above comments, and requests that response by **April 29, 2016**.

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION (IBWC)

While the Council responsibilities are for activities occurring above Imperial Dam, the Council appreciated the presentation made by the IBWC at its Santa Fe meeting. The Council encourages IBWC to continue its coordination with the Council, Forum and states on issues affecting the salinity of the waters of the Colorado River as they cross the international boundary.

The Council senses there may be a need to better inform Mexican officials and water users of the benefits to them from the Title II Salinity Control Program. The Council suggests that IBWC involve the Forum if there are ways that it can assist with any informational efforts directed to those using water below Imperial Dam. In the past the Forum and its staff has facilitated and conducted tours for designated officials from Mexico. It may be that IBWC would find this again to be helpful. If so, please contact the Forum in this regard.

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 2014 Review. The Program includes a significant amount of non-federal cost sharing. The states provide, in total, 30 percent cost share for the Program from the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund and the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund. The states are currently the second largest contributor to the Program behind USDA. In addition to the states' cost share, the local farmers cost share in the USDA on-farm program and many who participate in Reclamation's Basinwide Program bring significant dollars to their projects. The non-federal participants (states, landowners, irrigation districts, etc.) are ready in FY-2016 to contribute their share of the Program costs as up-front payments

Tables 1 and 2 contain the Council's recommendations for federal funding for FY-2016 through FY-2019. These funds are for the construction activities necessary to meet the Program objectives as set forth in the Plan of Implementation. The Forum also supports these recommendations and will seek 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 program objectives, as measured in tons of salt-load reduction. The funding recommendations shown in Table 1 are for the federal portion of project implementation costs only and are independent of the cost-share dollars from the Basin States Program. 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 Tables 1 and 2. The Council requests that in their responses, federal agencies specifically comment on funding for these non-construction activities.

Recognizing the need for the salinity control set forth in the Plan of Implementation, the Council makes the following funding recommendations:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Basinwide Program (Reclamation)

Reclamation has already received a FY-2016 appropriation of approximately \$8.423 million for the Basinwide Program. The Council recommends that Reclamation not reduce this appropriation any further through budgetary manipulations and that, in fact, it attempt to increase this appropriation by reprogramming any Reclamation-wide excess FY-2016 appropriations into the Basinwide Program prior to the end of the fiscal year. The Basinwide Program has proven its ability to effectively and efficiently utilize such end-of-the-year funding. Reclamation has provided the Forum and the Council with data that indicates that approximately 11,000 tons per year of new salinity control is needed if Reclamation is to meet its goal set out in the 2014 Review.

There are several funding issues facing the Program. The Forum has created a subcommittee to address these issues, and the Council recommends that Reclamation continue to work with this subcommittee in attempting to identify options and strategies for resolving these issues. Prior to reaching that resolution, the Council has recommended temporary funding level expenditures from the LCRBDF in FY-2017, FY-2018 and FY-2019. The Council recommends that as the FY-2018 budget process progresses, Reclamation make every attempt to budget \$10,283,000 to the Basinwide Program and that as it begins budgeting for FY-2019 it budgets the same amount. These funding levels are significantly reduced from previous recommendations by the Council. The Council believes that the funding levels it had previously recommended will ultimately be required if the Program is to maintain both the short and long-term goals set out in its most recent Plan of Implementation which will meet or exceed the requirements established by the salinity standard adopted by the States and approved by EPA for the Colorado River System. The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts to work with the Council to appropriately manage the funds over the next several years and to assist the Forum as it studies and develops options for generation of future revenues. Because large appropriations will be required in the future, the recommended funding levels are the minimum levels that are acceptable for continued success of the Program.

The Council requests that Reclamation continue to budget sufficient funds for required operation and maintenance of constructed units and for plan formulation, including the PVU alternatives studies and EIS effort. The Council requests that Reclamation also address anticipated funding needs for implementation of the preferred alternative in its future budget formulation. The Council also recognizes that Reclamation receives an appropriation to its Colorado River Water Quality Improvement Program. While this program is outside of the Title II funding, there is meaningful overlap and benefits between the two efforts, including supporting staff and maintaining stream gaging and monitoring activities. Therefore, the Council requests that Reclamation support the funding of this line item so that it does not draw dollars away from implementation efforts under the Title II program.

Bureau of Land Management

For a number of years, the Council has struggled with its funding recommendations for BLM and the accounting of salinity control activities performed by this agency. For many years, BLM has not been able to recite the amount of salinity control which was accomplished through its programs. BLM's salinity control funding comes through its Soil, Water and Air Program. The Council requests that BLM continue to fund projects in the Colorado River Basin under this program which, among other objectives, will improve the water quality within the Basin. In addition, this past year BLM, through a manager's discretion, has set aside approximately \$1,125,000 for specific salinity control activities within the Colorado River Basin. The expenditure of the funds in this manner has proven very beneficial to the Program by developing and testing methods of controlling salinity on public lands. The Council appreciates BLM's efforts to make more money available in FY-2015 for salinity control activities. Moving forward, the Council recommends \$1.5 million for the next four fiscal years be set aside for specific salinity control on public lands within the Basin. If BLM is successful in creating a line-item Colorado River Basin salinity control program, the Council asks that this amount of funding be requested.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

EQIP (NRCS)

The Council appreciates levels of funding made available to the salinity control effort through EQIP. Traditionally, on-farm salinity control has been some of the most cost-effective salinity efforts available. While much of the less expensive salinity control has now been accomplished and there has been a notable increase in on-farm salinity control costs in the last couple of years, cost-effective salinity control opportunities still exist. Continued funding is needed to meet the goal identified in the 2014 Review for the Department of Agriculture. The Council, noting a reduction below the three State Conservationists' recommendation of \$2 million in FY-2015 and \$4 million in FY2016, expresses its concern over the shortfalls and the direction in the trend.

The Council has determined that it will make its recommendations for the allocation of EQIP funding for the salinity control effort based on the Three-Year Funding Plan developed by the NRCS State Conservationists for Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. The funding allocations made by NRCS under EQIP generally do not come out until several months after the new fiscal year has begun and, therefore, input to NRCS is more immediate and projections out four years not nearly as germane. Further, the Three-Year Funding Plan put forth by the State Conservationists does not go out to FY-2019. However, to be consistent with other agencies, the Council has simply preliminarily used the FY-2018 amount for FY-2019.

Based on the information provided in the Three-Year Funding Plan and in support of that plan, the Council recommends the following fiscal year allocations for salinity control in the Basin: FY-2016 - \$14,338,000, FY-2017 - \$15,174,000, FY-2018 - \$15,857,000, with \$15,857,000 as a preliminary amount for FY-2019.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the Council's funding recommendations to the federal agencies. It should be noted that the funds identified in the tables do not include funds needed to continue to operate and maintain salinity control features, nor for the requisite

planning and investigation studies necessary for a successful and cost-effective program. The Council expects that where there is a responsibility to provide funding for these purposes, the agencies will also include the needed additional funding in their budgets.

TABLE 1
Colorado River Salinity Control – Department of the Interior
Funding Recommendations (2016-2019)
December 31, 2015

	Fiscal Years			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Bureau of Reclamation ^{1,2} Basinwide Program	\$11,218,000	\$10,283,000	\$10,283,000	\$10,283,000
Bureau of Land Management ³ Salinity Specific Funding from the Soil, Water and Air Program	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000

Notes:

1. The Council anticipates and requests that Reclamation budget sufficient funds for required operation and maintenance of constructed units and for plan formulation in addition to these amounts.
2. Funding recommendations in Table 1 do not include funds recommended for studies and future implementation at the PVU. The Council needs the assistance of Reclamation to determine the level of funding needed to support the PVU.
3. The Council anticipates and requests that BLM budget sufficient funds for inventory and ranking, planning, maintenance, monitoring, evaluation and support.

TABLE 2
Colorado River Salinity Control – Department of Agriculture (EQIP)
Funding Recommendations (2016-2019)
December 31, 2015

STATE	FY-2016 ¹	FY-2017 ¹	FY-2018 ¹	FY-2019 ²
COLORADO				
FA	\$7,600,000	\$7,600,000	\$7,600,000	\$7,600,000
UTAH				
FA	\$6,548,000	\$7,324,000	\$7,957,000	\$7,957,000
WYOMING				
FA	\$190,000	\$250,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
TOTALS	\$14,338,000	\$15,174,000	\$15,857,000	\$15,857,000

Notes:

1. Based on State Conservationists' Three-Year Funding Plan (2016-2018)
2. Same as FY-2018. Advisory Council recommendation for guidance when developing 2017-2019 Three-Year Funding Plan

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 agencies' efforts put forth in 2015 and looks forward to providing a framework for future coordination and consultation. The Council requests that written responses to this report be provided by **April 29, 2016**. Responses should be sent to the Council Chairman, Mr. David Robbins, at the following address:

David W. Robbins, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, CO 80264

It would be appreciated if copies of the responses are sent to Mr. Kib Jacobson, Reclamation's Program Manager for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (who also serves as the Designated Federal Officer to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council), and to the Forum's Executive Director, Mr. Don Barnett, at the following addresses:

Kib Jacobson, Program Manager
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
125 S. State Street, Room 8100
Salt Lake City, UT 84138

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

**U. S. Department of the Interior
and
U. S. Department of Agriculture
and
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency**

**Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council**

Charter

1. **Committee's Official Designation.** The official designation of this Federal advisory committee is the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council (Council).
2. **Authority.** The Council was established by Section 204(a) of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, Public Law 93-320, Title II, as amended by Public Laws 98-569, 104-20, 104-27, 106-459, and 110-246 (Act), and in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. Appendix 2.
3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities.** The Council will provide advice and recommendations to the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior (Interior) and Agriculture (Agriculture) and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as stated in paragraph 4.
4. **Description of Duties.** The Council shall be advisory only and shall:
 - a. Act as liaison between both the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and the Administrator of the EPA and the States in accomplishing the purposes of Title II;
 - b. Receive reports from the Secretary of the Interior on the progress of the salinity control program and review and comment on said reports;
 - c. Recommend to the Secretary of the Interior and the Administrator of the EPA appropriate studies of further projects, techniques, or methods for accomplishing the purposes of Title II; and
 - d. Provide to the Secretary of the Interior advice and consultation regarding implementation of the Basin States Program to carry out salinity control activities.
5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports.** The Council will report to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, and the Administrator of the EPA through the Designated Federal Officer (DFO).
6. **Support.** Support for the Council will be provided by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation.

7. **Estimated Annual Operating Cost and Staff Years.** The annual operating costs associated with supporting the Council's functions are estimated to be \$75,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and .20 staff years.
8. **Designated Federal Officer.** The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will approve or call all Council and subcommittee meetings, prepare and approve all meeting agendas, attend all Council and subcommittee meetings, adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and chair meetings when directed to do so by the Secretary.
9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings.** The Council will meet approximately twice a year, and at such other times as designated by the DFO.
10. **Duration.** Continuing.
11. **Termination.** The Council is subject to biennial review and will become inactive 2 years from the date this Charter is filed, unless prior to that date, it is renewed in accordance with Section 14 of the FACA. The Council will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.
12. **Membership and Designation.** Membership of the Council is specified in Title II as being comprised of no more than three representatives from each of the seven Basin States (Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California). The representatives will serve at the discretion of the Governors of the state that appointed them.

Members of the Council serve without compensation. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business, members engaged in Council or subcommittee business approved by the DFO may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service under Section 5703 of Title 5 of the United States Code.

13. **Ethics Responsibilities of Members.** No Council or subcommittee member will participate in any specific party matter including a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct financial interest.
14. **Subcommittees.** Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees can be formed for the purposes of compiling information or conducting research. However, subcommittees must act only under the direction of the DFO and must report their recommendations to the full Council for consideration. Subcommittees must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. The Council Chair, with the approval of the DFO, will appoint subcommittee members. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO.

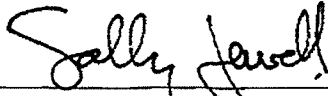
15. **Recordkeeping.** The records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees of the Council, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26, Item 2 and other approved Agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.

**U. S. Department of the Interior
and
U. S. Department of Agriculture
and
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council**

Charter

Counterpart Signatory Page



Secretary of the Interior

JUL 01 2014

Date Signed

SEP 17 2014

Date Filed

**U. S. Department of the Interior
and
U. S. Department of Agriculture
and
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council**

Charter

Counterpart Signatory Page



Secretary of Agriculture

AUG 18 2014
Date Signed

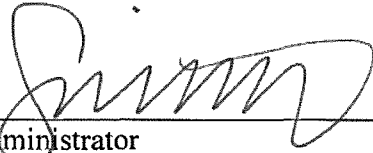
SEP 17 2014
Date Filed

**U. S. Department of the Interior
and
U. S. Department of Agriculture
and
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency**

**Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council**

Charter

Counterpart Signatory Page



Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency

9/12/14

Date Signed

SEP 17 2014

Date Filed

Attachment B

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP December 31, 2015

ARIZONA

Thomas Buschatzke
Phoenix, Arizona

Marie Pearthree
Phoenix, Arizona

Linda Taunt
Phoenix, Arizona

NEVADA

Leo M. Drozdoff
Carson City, Nevada

John J. Entsminger
Las Vegas, Nevada

Jayne Harkins
Las Vegas, Nevada

UTAH

Eric Millis
Salt Lake City, Utah

Gawain Snow
Vernal, Utah

Leah Ann Lamb
Salt Lake City, Utah

CALIFORNIA

Bill Hasencamp
Los Angeles, California

Tom Howard
Sacramento, California

Tanya Trujillo
Glendale, California

NEW MEXICO

Tom Blaine
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Trais Kliphuis
Santa Fe, New Mexico

WYOMING

Chad Espenscheid
Big Piney, Wyoming

Patrick T. Tyrrell
Cheyenne, Wyoming

David Waterstreet
Cheyenne, Wyoming

COLORADO

James Eklund
Denver, Colorado

Pat Pfaltzgraff
Denver, Colorado

David W. Robbins
Denver, Colorado

Attachment C

Federal Responses to the 2014 Advisory Council Report



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8

1595 Wynkoop Street
Denver, CO 80202-1129
Phone 800-227-8917
www.epa.gov/region08

MAR 13 2015

Ref: EPR-EP

David Robbins, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, CO 80264

Dear Mr. Robbins:

In response to your Advisory Council Annual Report summary, we offer the following. We appreciate the recognition of the EPA's support efforts (in providing NPDES permit data to the Forum) for the 2014 Review Water Quality Standards for Salinity. Consistent with your recommendation, we will continue to support individual states, and Tribes where applicable, as they forward adopted standards for approval.

We clearly understand the importance of the Paradox Valley Unit and the ongoing EIS process. As a Cooperating Agency in the process, our Underground Injection and NEPA program representatives will continue to support the review efforts by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Finally, in response to your renewed request, we will maintain EPA's Colorado River Salinity Control coordination efforts within Region 8 for this year.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Garcia Jr.", written over a faint circular stamp.

Humberto L. Garcia Jr., Director
Ecosystems Protection Program

cc: Kib Jacobson, Don A. Barnett



Printed on Recycled Paper



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

COLORADO FIELD OFFICE/LAKEWOOD
PO BOX 25486, DENVER FEDERAL CENTER
DENVER, COLORADO 80225-0486

IN REPLY REFER TO:
ES/CO: BR/Salinity
TAILS 06E24100-2015-CPA-0013

David Robbins, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity
Control Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, Colorado 80264

Dear Mr. Robbins:

We have read through the 2014 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program and provide the following response to comments addressed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

We appreciate the Council's acknowledgement of the Service's role in the Salinity Control Program: to find, review and support viable wildlife replacement projects, as well as review monitoring and evaluation reports and tabulate wildlife habitat replacement acres both completed and needed for each salinity control unit (SCU). The Service will continue these activities and work proactively and collaboratively with other agencies to implement the Salinity Control Program.

We continue to work closely with the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to evaluate and provide input on habitat replacement plans that all parties, including state wildlife management agencies, agree will provide suitable long term habitat replacement. For example, we have been involved with discussions of replacement or restoration of a wetland that recently dried up near Farson, Wyoming, in the Big Sandy Salinity SCU. Another example of our ongoing collaboration is working with the Colorado Basin States Program Coordinator and NRCS on a wildlife habitat project near Olathe, Colorado, in the Gunnison SCU. On a site visit, the Service called attention to the presence of non-native fish in a pond at the site, and made the recommendations of screening the inlet and outlets to prevent escapement of non-native fish into endangered fish critical habitat in the Gunnison River downstream of the pond. Also, we continue to work with NRCS on the challenge of providing wildlife habitat replacement projects in the Henry's Fork Salinity SCU where the final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) identified potential impacts to a total of 800 wetland acres. We are monitoring the progress on the Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) properties in the Grand Valley SCU, as an ongoing habitat improvement project involves the removal of non-native woody vegetation.

The Service continues to participate as a cooperating agency in the evaluation of alternatives for salt control at the Paradox site, attending most cooperating agency meetings. We remain committed to working with the Salinity Control Program to evaluate Paradox alternatives, with the goals of controlling salinity loads in the Colorado River while also minimizing impacts on the environment and to trust resources, including migratory birds.

The Service participates in the Salinity Control Program by providing technical assistance on fish and wildlife resource impact assessment, restoration, and management, through implementation of Federal statutes including the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Service provides independent review and oversight of program aspects dealing with fish and wildlife resources, including our assessment of the degree to which fish and wildlife have received due consideration in project planning and incidental fish and wildlife values foregone have been replaced. We continue to consult with the Bureau under Section 7 of the ESA regarding historic and new depletions associated with piping projects. We will continue to provide technical assistance to the Salinity Control Program to avoid impacts to listed species, including the newly listed Gunnison sage grouse (*Centrocercus minimis*) and western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*).

As a Department of Interior agency, the Service is called upon to assist in reducing salt loads to the Colorado River. We will continue to work with the Federal partners to address fish and wildlife values forgone and assist with meeting their habitat replacement goals. Please contact Barb Osmundson on any wildlife related issues at (970) 628-7189.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Pelizza
Acting Colorado Field Supervisor

cc: Kib Jacobson, Program Manager, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program, U.S.
Bureau of Reclamation, 125 S. State St, Rm 7311, Salt Lake City, UT
84138-1102
/ Don A. Barnett, Executive Director, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum, 106
West 500 S., Suite 101, Bountiful, UT 84010



MAR 10 2015

Mr. David Robbins
Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, Colorado 80264

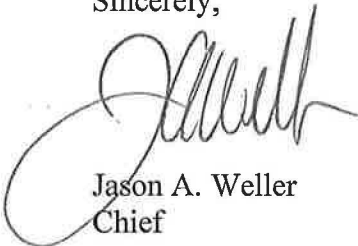
Dear Mr. Robbins:

Thank you for your letters of February 10, 2015, to Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack and me, transmitting the 2014 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program for comment.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service appreciates the support and commitment of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council to reduce salinity loading in the Colorado River Basin. Your long standing support to improve the environment and economies of Colorado River water users is to be commended. The enclosure addresses each of your comments and recommendations, as requested.

Again, thank you for writing, and for your continued leadership and support of the Colorado River Basin salinity control activities.

Sincerely,



Jason A. Weller
Chief

Enclosure

Enclosure

RECOMMENDATION

“The Council also appreciates the efforts of the Science Team in providing the TAG and the Work Group valuable analysis of various issues facing the Program and reviewing potential study efforts. The Council recommends that this support continue.”

NRCS COMMENT

NRCS continues to support the purposes and structure of the Science Team and will continue to provide representatives to the team who can provide technical expertise to identify, develop, and prioritize science needs.

RECOMMENDATION

“The Council appreciates receiving the Federal Accomplishments Report prior to its fall meeting and believes it helps facilitate the discussions at that meeting. The Council does not want to discourage the agencies from making full and complete reporting of their accomplishments to Reclamation. In fact, the Council believes such reporting is valuable to Reclamation in its continuing oversight and coordination of the Program. The Council does ask, however, that the agencies’ reports be more concise and focused on the accomplishments of the agencies during the year in implementing the Program.

COMMENT

NRCS will continue to provide the written report prior to the Council’s fall meeting, as well as an oral report at the meeting. The NRCS reports will focus on those items it feels are most useful for the management of the program in the near and mid-term.

RECOMMENDATION

NRCS-specific

“The Council recognizes the key and essential role that NRCS has played in reducing the salt load of the Colorado River for the benefit of downstream agricultural and municipal users. Providing these benefits has resulted from a coordinated effort between the three state NRCS offices in the Upper Basin...”

COMMENT

NRCS will continue to coordinate its efforts in the Upper Basin States by maintaining an open dialog between the State Conservationists, regional Assistant Chief, State program managers, and the staff of the affected field offices. NRCS encourages the Council and its representatives to participate in its local and State advisory meetings to stay apprized in ongoing developments in managing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program as it affects salinity control.

RECOMMENDATION

“The Council believes that the efforts of NRCS’s Salinity Control Program Coordinator have been critical to this success. The Council sees an absolute need to continue this position and recommends it be filled with a motivated and well qualified individual if the current coordinator were to leave.”

COMMENT

NRCS is committed to supporting the Council at the National level. This position is key to assist the Council and States. NRCS will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the coordinator in assisting the agency to meet its strategic objectives. At such time that the position might become vacant, NRCS will confer with the Advisory Council and the other salinity partners to determine if filling the vacancy or if some other preferred staffing action is warranted.

RECOMMENDATION

“The Council has observed that the role of an informed State Conservationist is a most important role with respect to the success of the Program. Hence, the Council has become concerned about the temporary (acting) assignments that have been in place in the States of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming for a major part of 2014.”

COMMENT

NRCS agrees that permanently placed State Conservationists in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming is important to provide leadership in maintaining the success of the salinity control program, as well as all conservation programs and issues in a State. NRCS is pleased to announce that Clint Evans has been recently appointed as the State Conservationist in Colorado. David Brown and Astrid Martinez continue in their role as State Conservationists in Utah and Wyoming, respectively.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council also recommends that NRCS pursue salinity control in established salinity control areas before going to other parts of the Basin to expend EQIP funds which have been allocated by headquarters specifically for the Program.

COMMENT

NRCS will continue to service applications as funds are available within the defined project areas that accomplish the most environmental benefits, including salt control, in the most cost effective manner. NRCS will continue to coordinate among the States of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming to utilize allocated funding as EQIP applications are available.

RECOMMENDATION

“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.”

COMMENT

In addition to EQIP, NRCS is utilizing its other authorities such as Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) to conduct inventories, planning and scoping, and evaluation of potential new projects. NRCS will continue to provide assistance upon request throughout the Upper Basin of the Colorado River and attempt to quantify any salinity reduction impacts.

RECOMMENDATION

“The Council has determined that it will make its recommendations for the allocation of EQIP funding for the salinity control effort based on the Three-Year Funding Plan developed by the NRCS State Conservationist for Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming.

Based on the information in the Three-Year Funding Plan and in support of that plan, the Council recommends the following fiscal year (FY) allocations for salinity control in the Basin: FY 2015 - \$17,357,500; FY 2016- \$18,910,000; and FY 2017 - \$17,831,750, with \$17,831,750 as a preliminary amount for FY 2018.”

COMMENT

NRCS appreciates the Council’s continued strong support of EQIP. The FY 2015 allocation of EQIP for financial assistance to the salinity projects in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming is \$12 million. This allocation is less than the amount identified in the Three-Year Funding Plan, but was required in consideration of overall funding reductions being managed by NRCS. State Conservationists will continue to coordinate with the Advisory Council when developing their future State Resource Assessment fund requests.



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Upper Colorado Regional Office
125 South State Street, Room 8100
Salt Lake City, UT 84138-1102

IN REPLY REFER TO:

UC-240
RES-9.00

MAR 27 2015

Mr. David W. Robbins
Colorado River Basin Salinity
Control Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, CO 80264

Dear Chairman Robbins:

On behalf of Secretary Sally Jewell and Commissioner Estevan Lopez, I am responding to your letter of February 10, 2015, regarding the 2014 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (Salinity Control Program), prepared by the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council (Council). The Council contributes greatly to the success of the Salinity Control Program. We truly value your partnership, participation, and recommendations in the Salinity Control Program. The Salinity Control Program continues to make measurable progress in controlling the salinity problem. Our responses to the specific recommendations in the report for the Bureau of Reclamation are enclosed.

We thank you for your support and for being such an active and aggressive partner in the Salinity Control Program. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Kib Jacobson at 801-524-3753 or kjacobson@usbr.gov.

Sincerely,

Reed R. Murray
Acting Regional Director

Enclosure

cc: See next page.

cc: ✓ Mr. Don Barnett
Executive Director
Colorado River Basin
Salinity Control Forum
106 West 500 South, Suite 101
Bountiful, Utah 84010

Mr. Kib Jacobson
Designated Federal Officer
Bureau of Reclamation
125 South State Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138

Mr. Patrick Dent
Chairman, Work Group
Central Arizona Water Cons. District
P.O. Box 43020
Phoenix, Arizona 85080-3020

Reclamation's Response to the Specific Recommendations on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program's 2014 Annual Report

Paradox Valley Unit (PVU)

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - General Issues: The Council requests that Reclamation not only plan to advance the ongoing planning efforts for the PVU, but that it also secure the needed funding for the ongoing planning. The Council also requests that Reclamation program and budget needed funding for planning and design of the selected alternative after the Record of Decision is issued in early FY-2018.

Response: The PVU Alternatives Study and EIS continue to move forward on schedule to have the Record of Decision issued in early FY-18. The planning efforts and studies are funded by appropriations and by transferring in funds not utilized in other programs. The need to program and budget funding for planning and design of the selected alternative in FY-18 is known by Reclamation budget staff and management and will be included in the FY-18 budget process. Reclamation's Western Colorado Area Office staff and Salinity Control Program staff, as usual, will monitor the process and provide input and guidance.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department - Reclamation: In the General Issues section, the Council has expressed its support for the PVU Alternative Studies and EIS process and continues to emphasize the need to complete these studies in a timely manner. This should include a fair evaluation of the use of evaporation ponds as a disposal alternative.

Response: The PVU Alternatives Study continues to move forward with an Induced Seismicity/Maximum Allowable Surface Injection Pressure (MASIP) consultant review board (CRB) held in January 2015 and an Evaporation Pond CRB being conducted in March 2015. These review boards are helping answer key questions in the Alternatives Investigation to identify the preferred alternative. Final reports for both CRB's will be available in June 2015. A Request for Information is also currently being advertised to identify any commercial opportunities.

A roadmap has been developed for actions necessary to implement a second injection well alternative in the event the current well fails or deep well injection becomes the preferred alternative. Several actions identified in the roadmap are scheduled for FY15 and are moving forward.

The EIS process is in the alternatives development stage with all previously identified alternatives being considered. Additional studies are required and are being implemented to determine the technical, economical and regulatory viabilities of each.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department - Reclamation: The Council also recommends that Reclamation work with the Work Group to begin developing a contingency plan for placing back into operation as quickly as possible the PVU if a shut-down were to occur prior to the implementation of a preferred alternative. This might include fast tracking the permitting and construction of a replacement injection well.

Response: A Contingency Plan which outlines three alternatives has been developed and submitted to the Work Group for review in March 2015. In addition to the Contingency Plan, the previously mentioned roadmap to a second injection well has been developed which outlines the major steps necessary to implement a second injection well if that were to become the preferred contingency option. The actions outlined in the roadmap are largely dependent and/or dictated by the results of preceding investigations which in some instances prevents concurrent implementation.

Science Team

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - General Issues: The Council also appreciates the efforts of the Science Team in providing the TAG and the Work Group valuable analysis of various issues facing the Program and reviewing potential study efforts. The Council recommends that this support continue.

Response: Reclamation also recognizes the important role that the Science Team has played in providing valuable analysis and reviews for the Salinity Control Program. It is certainly Reclamation's desire and intent for the Science Team to continue in this important role.

Federal Accomplishments Report

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - General Issues: The Council does ask, however, that the agencies' reports be more concise and focused on the accomplishments of the agencies during the year in implementing the Program.

Response: Reclamation agrees with the Council that the agencies' reports in the informal Federal Accomplishments Report be concise and focused on the agency accomplishments. Reclamation will look for ways to make its Federal Accomplishments Report more concise and focused on accomplishments.

Economic Damages Model

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department - Reclamation: The Council recommends that Reclamation work with the Work Group to evaluate and revise the economic damages model. The Council requests that Reclamation make updating and improving the salinity damages calculations a priority.

Response: Reclamation agrees with the Council that the economic damages model needs to be updated and improved. To that end, Reclamation assigned Dr. Jim Prairie to work with the economists in Reclamation's Denver Technical Services Center to evaluate and revise the model. Dr. Prairie has already been able to apply his modeling and computer skills to greatly improve the workings of the model. Reclamation already has met twice with the Work Group's Economic Damages Model Subcommittee to familiarize them with the model and to receive their input. Reclamation will continue to work closely with the Subcommittee and Work Group as it updates and improves the model, with the goal to have the model providing economic damages estimates that the Forum will have confidence in for its next Triennial Review in 2017.

A separate effort is being advanced by Reclamation's Southern California Area Office, in cooperation with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, to update the inputs that are used in the model. It has been more than a decade since the inputs were updated.

Funding

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department - Reclamation: The Council recommends that Reclamation seek increased appropriations in FY-2016, FY-2017, and FY-2018 in accordance with Table 1.

Response: See next response

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department – Basinwide Program (Reclamation): Reclamation has already received a FY-2015 appropriation of approximately \$6.36 million for the Basinwide Program. The Council recommends Reclamation not reduce this appropriation any further through budgetary manipulations and that, in fact, it attempt to increase this appropriation by reprogramming any Reclamation-wide excess FY-2015 appropriations into the Basinwide Program prior to the end of the fiscal year.

Response: See next response

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department – Basinwide Program (Reclamation): The Council recommends that as the FY-2017 budget process progresses, Reclamation make every attempt to budget \$11,218,000 to the Basinwide Program and that as it begins budgeting for FY-2018 it budgets \$12,153,000.

Response: Reclamation appreciates the support the Basin States provide to budget funding requests for the Salinity Control Program. Reclamation is making every effort to fund the Basinwide Program at the highest levels possible while balancing the needs of other high priority projects and programs within a flat-to-declining-budget environment. Reclamation also endeavors to transfer as many funds as possible not utilized in other programs into Reclamation's Salinity Control Program. Reclamation's UC Region takes every opportunity

to make known the successes and the needs of the Salinity Control Program at all levels of Reclamation, within the Department and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Reclamation welcomes the opportunity to work with the Basin States to identify and prioritize the activities to be funded by appropriations received for the Salinity Control Program. Reclamation will report to the Council on its efforts to secure additional funding.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS: 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.

Response: Each year about \$300,000 is appropriated into the Colorado River Water Quality Program (CRWQP) account. In recent years up to \$300,000 in additional funds has been transferred to this account at the end of the year. Funds in the CRWQP are used for staff salaries, monitoring and evaluation of implemented projects, technical and education assistance, and planning for future Salinity Control Program activities. There is no cost-sharing from the Basin Funds applied to these funds.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department – Basinwide Program (Reclamation): As Reclamation is aware, there are several funding issues facing the Program. The Forum has created a subcommittee to begin to address these issues, and the Council recommends that Reclamation continue to work with this subcommittee in attempting to identify options and strategies for resolving these issues.

Response: Staff from Reclamation's Upper and LCRs will continue to work with the Forum-created subcommittee, the Forum, and the Council to identify options and strategies for resolving the funding issues so that the Salinity Control Program can continue at its present or higher level of activity.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department – Basinwide Program (Reclamation): The Council requests that Reclamation continue to budget sufficient funds for required operation and maintenance of constructed units and for plan formulation, including the PVU alternatives studies and EIS process.

Response: In FY14 for operation, maintenance, monitoring, and technical assistance of the salinity units of Grand Valley, PVU, and McElmo Creek, Reclamation expended appropriations of \$1,414,000, \$2,632,000 and \$335,000, respectively. In FY15, \$1,882,000, \$2,683,000, and \$689,000 have been appropriated for operation, maintenance, monitoring, and technical assistance of the same units respectively. Reclamation feels that the units are being adequately funded to operate, maintain, monitor, and provide technical assistance.

Reclamation provided from its Salinity Control Program to the Survey for stream gaging on the Colorado River about \$534,000 in FY14 and about \$480,000 in FY15. This will assist in

continuing the long-term monitoring that demonstrates the effectiveness of the implemented salinity projects.

For response to “budget sufficient funds for the PVU Alternatives Studies and EIS process” see the first response under the PVU section.



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Office of the Director
Reston, Virginia 20192

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 101
GS15000509

MAY 07 2015

Mr. David Robbins, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, Colorado 80264

Dear Mr. Robbins:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Advisory Council's comments and recommendations presented in the 2014 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (CRBSCP). We appreciate the Council's recognition of the responsiveness of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) science support to CRBSCP information needs.

As noted in the report, Patrick Lambert, our principal representative to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (CRBSCF), has recently moved from his position as Director of the USGS Utah Water Science Center (UWSC) to a two-year assignment working with the Western States Water Council. Although we are happy to report that Mr. Lambert will continue to assist CRBSCP in science planning as his new assignment permits, we have also assigned David Susong, the new Director of the UWSC, to the team to help ensure our timely support.

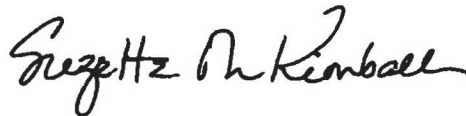
We also appreciate the Council's recognition of the relevance of our work in the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) and at Pah Tempe Hot Springs to the future management of those principal salinity load sources. In the fall of 2014, the USGS, with support from the CRBSCP and in collaboration with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), completed the last of three successful experiments assessing the effects of managed groundwater withdrawal on brackish discharge from Pah Tempe Hot Springs to the Virgin River. The results of these tests, and subsequent model building, will assist program managers in assessing the feasibility of mitigating the salinity load from the Pah Tempe Hot Springs to the Virgin River. We will continue to work closely with Reclamation and other stakeholders as science products and tools from the PVU and Pah Tempe Hot Springs studies are completed and released to ensure best understanding of their utility and to define next steps where needed.

The USGS will continue to be an active participant in the CRBSCP Science Team to support monitoring and science investigations that improve understanding of salinity loading concepts in general, and management tools to meet specific CRBSCP needs. We will also continue to

work with CRBSCP participating agencies to help communicate the directions of CRBSCP on-the-ground projects and aid in the assessment of Program progress. Key science support tasks in 2015 include collaborative work with the Bureau of Land Management to continue to assess mechanisms of salinity loading from rangelands and the effects of land-management practices on the transport of salts from those lands to streams.

Again, let me thank you for the opportunity to respond to and address the Council's comments and recommendations. If you would like any additional information or have questions, please contact David Susong, Director of the USGS Utah Water Science Center and the USGS Representative to the CRBSCF, at (801) 908-5033 or ddsusong@usgs.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzette M. Kimball". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Suzette M. Kimball
Acting Director

Copy to: Don A. Barnett, Executive Director, CRBSC Forum
Kib Jacobson, Designated Federal Officer, CRBSC
Advisory Council



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Washington, D.C. 20240
<http://www.blm.gov>
SEP 23 2015



In Reply Refer To:
7240 (280)

David W. Robbins, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council
1660 Lincoln Street, Suite 2720
Denver, CO 80264

Dear Mr. Robbins:

Thank you for your recent recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Advisory Council's 2014 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program. As requested, this letter addresses the Council's recommendations to the BLM.

Recommendation

1. "...As BLM moves to fill "Ms. Dean's" position, the Council encourages BLM to continue down the path she has established. Ms. Dean reported in Santa Fe BLM's decision to seek a line-item Colorado River Basin salinity control program within its budget. This is something the Council has been encouraging for many years and we applaud these efforts. The Council is committed to supporting BLM in its efforts to move forward with a Colorado River Basin salinity control line item."

Response

The BLM has supported the Colorado River Salinity Program by allocating funds from the Soil, Water and Air Management subactivity funds to the states for specific projects in the Colorado River Basin that would reduce and avert sedimentation and salinity increases within waters. The funds have ranged from \$750,000 to just over \$1,000,000 depending on the fiscal year funding and competing priorities within the Soil, Water and Air Management Program. The BLM can only suggest specific programs to be identified within budget subactivities in the President's budget and has to follow a process of approvals through the BLM, the Department of Interior (DOI), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Division of Environmental Quality and Protection has been in discussions with the appropriate BLM staff to try to implement the designation of an annual amount for the Colorado River Salinity Control Program. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, Congress intervened and directed the BLM in the appropriation process to allocate \$1,130,000 to projects that would reduce sedimentation and salinity in the Colorado

River Basin. This direction will remain in future budgets unless additional direction is given in the President's budget or subsequent congressional direction.

Recommendation

2. "The Council appreciates BLM's efforts to create a better understanding of salt mobilization on public lands, including a significant literature review of rangeland salinity control. The Council notes that when the Forum was drafting its 2014 Review, BLM could not provide an accounting of the tons of salt controlled by BLM programs. This has been a continual challenge. The Council is pleased to hear that BLM is initiating renewed aggressive efforts to identify and implement salinity specific activities in the Colorado River Basin and to account for past and future salinity reductions. There is an important and immediate need for quantifying past net salinity improvements within the Basin. The Council recommends that BLM continue with this effort so that pertinent information may be used in the future to assist the Program."

Response

As you mentioned, the BLM compiled a bibliography that is updated electronically and a printed version has been published with over 800 worldwide citations of salinity transport. A second report was written to summarize the information and findings from the citations included in the first book, *Salinity Mobilization and Transport from Rangelands: Assessment, Recommendations, and Knowledge Gaps*. The USDA-Agricultural Research Service has provided a set of copies of the printed version of the bibliography to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum (Forum). An online, version of the bibliography that is updated with new publications can be accessed at <http://goo.gl/uHEOaw>.

The BLM recognizes the need to improve reporting on the effectiveness of its programs contributing to Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program objectives. The BLM is collaborating with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service to develop tools based upon regional watershed and water-quality models that will provide the means to quantify and account for tons of salt retained by a wide range of BLM management activities throughout the Colorado River Basin. This accounting will be more representative of the BLM's efforts to control sediment transport. It will include activities funded through many other programs in addition to ongoing projects funded under the Soil, Water, and Air Management Program. The model-based tools are not yet complete. The BLM anticipates being able to provide an accounting in FY 2015 that includes sediment reductions associated with 1) road-maintenance activities, 2) efforts to meet land-health standards for livestock grazing, and 3) emergency stabilization and recovery efforts following wildfires. It is the BLM's goal to improve the model-based tools in FY 2016 and plans to increase the number of activities contributing to sediment reduction in future annual accomplishment reports to the Forum.

Recommendation

3. "...Currently the coordinator is assigned additional duties, and the Council requests BLM to review the issue of how these other assigned tasks take from the coordinator needed time to focus on the Salinity Control Program. The new path outlined by Ms. Dean in Santa Fe will require additional work and coordinating efforts by BLM staff."

Response

The BLM made organizational changes to the position following the departure of the previous salinity coordinator in 2011 by 1) transferring administrative responsibility for the position from the Washington Office to the National Operations Center and 2) combining job duties with a national water-quality specialist. The combined position was intended to improve the effectiveness of services and the level of expertise delivered to all BLM Offices and meets commitments to support Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program efforts. The BLM recognized the workload challenges in meeting all expectations of the combined position when the current salinity coordinator was hired in 2012 and has reorganized duties since that time to focus work on efforts within the Colorado River Basin.

Recommendation

4. "While Reclamation is the lead agency for the PVU EIS, BLM has an important role as the major land manager for the study area. The Council emphasizes the importance for BLM to be an active and aggressive partner in seeking solutions for the [Paradox Valley Unit] PVU salinity control project."

Response

The BLM Colorado State Office has been working closely with Bureau of Reclamation over the past couple years to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) needed to identify alternatives for replacing the existing Paradox Valley Unit PVU injection well facility. The BLM is willing to consider supporting the use of public lands for the various alternatives assessed in the EIS, consistent with existing policies and regulations.

Recommendation

5. "The Council is concerned that BLM has not been able, and is not now able, to even make a good estimate of its salinity control accomplishments nor is it able to, with accuracy, report funds expended that result in salinity control. The Council requests that the new Coordinator be tasked with the challenge to implement better recording and reporting of efforts and funds spent."

Response

In FY 2013 the BLM instituted tracking codes to identify and track activities and related allocations associated with salinity control and identify and capture related spending in salinity control. This has enabled the BLM to better record and report on efforts and funds spent. In FY 2014 the BLM allocated \$1.2M in support of Salinity related projects. The effort to develop model-based tools to quantify and account for salinity control achieved by other management programs (as described in response to Recommendation 2, above) will greatly improve our capability to track and report salinity-control activities. The systems and metrics used to account for expenditures and effectiveness of these programs were not designed to address salinity-control efforts, but we will work to improve the usefulness of the information included in future annual accomplishment reports to the Forum.

Thank you for your support and recommendations. The BLM will continue efforts to make measurable progress toward reducing salinity in the waters of the Colorado River Basin. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Miyoshi Stith, Division Chief for Environmental Quality and Protection, at mstith@blm.gov or (202) 912-7136.

Sincerely,



Michael H. Tupper
Acting Assistant Director
Resources and Planning

cc: Kib Jacobson
Designated Federal Officer
Colorado River Basin Salinity
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Don A Barnett
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106 West 500 South, Suite 101
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