

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

2019

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

December 31, 2019

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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 2018 and will need to be renewed again in 2020. 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, 2019, 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 which was 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, 2019.

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. 25, 2017*, and the *2017 Review, Water Quality Standards for Salinity, Colorado River System, October 2017* (2017 Review) for a discussion of the Program. The first report is available at www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/pdfs/PR25final.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 2019. The meetings were held on June 5 -6 in Denver, Colorado and October 24- 25 in Phoenix, Arizona. At the meetings the Council heard summaries of activities and reports of accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2019 (FY-2019). It further discussed the federal agencies' responses to the 2018 Advisory Council Report. The Council provided the federal agencies the opportunity to report orally and to explain these responses to the 2018 Advisory Council Report. Included in this report as Attachment C are the federal written responses to the 2018 Advisory Council Report. At these meetings the Council also heard reports from the federal agencies on implementation of the Program during FY-2019 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 Council, 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 with Reclamation 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 even more important as the EIS process nears completion and replacement alternatives are considered. The Council requests that the Secretary of the Interior and Assistant Secretary take specific stewardship in seeing this effort through to completion.

The Council is also pleased with BLM's continuing effort to study and understand salt mobilization processes on rangelands. Reclamation, USGS and ARS have provided great assistance in this effort. This has been and continues to be very important. 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 BLM, Reclamation, USGS and ARS to pursue opportunities to fund these efforts. With significant seed money for these efforts having come from the limited Basin States Program funds, 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 requests that the USGS continue to provide science support in this effort.

The Council also appreciates the efforts of the multi-agency 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 meeting, 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 a year ago to move the period for renewal forward. Nevertheless, in order for the Charter to be effective it needs to be signed by all three sponsoring entities and, therefore, wasn't filed until August 31, 2018. The Council herein requests that the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and EPA all get on board such that the Charter is renewed in July 2020. The Council recognizes that it is somewhat unique from other FACA committees and so it requests that the Charter stay consistent with the Congressional mandate to the Council and that no additional provisions be added which would limit the Council's effectiveness in meeting its role in moving the Program forward.

PROGRAM FUNDING 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 2017 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 producers 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-2020 to contribute their share of the Program costs as up-front payments.

Tables 1 and 2 contain the Council's recommendations, adopted by the Council at its October meeting, for federal funding for FY-2020 through FY-2023. These funds are for the construction activities necessary to meet the Program objectives as set forth in the Plan of Implementation found in the 2017 Review. 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 that 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. Additional specific recommendations on Program funding are found in the individual agencies sections below.

TABLE 1
Colorado River Salinity Control – Department of the Interior
Funding Recommendations (2020-2023)
December 31, 2019

	Fiscal Years			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bureau of Reclamation ^{1,2} Basinwide Program	\$10,100,000	\$10,100,000	\$10,100,000	\$10,100,000
Bureau of Land Management Salinity Specific Funding from the Aquatic Habitat Mgmt. Program	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000

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.

TABLE 2
Colorado River Salinity Control – Department of Agriculture (EQIP)
Funding Recommendations (2020-2023)
December 31, 2019

STATE	FY-2020 ¹	FY-2021 ¹	FY-2022 ¹	FY-2023 ²
COLORADO				
FA	\$6,500,000	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000
UTAH				
FA	\$6,674,000	\$6,750,200	\$6,523,900	\$6,523,900
WYOMING				
FA	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
TOTALS	\$13,424,000	\$13,000,200	\$12,773,900	\$12,773,900

Notes:

1. Based on State Conservationists' Three-Year Funding Plan (2020-2022)
2. Same as FY-2022. Advisory Council recommendation for guidance when developing 2021-2023 Three-Year Funding Plan

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 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 to the Program from the top down, including the assemblage and support of a capable and dedicated salinity team. The Council also appreciates the increased involvement of the Lower Colorado Region (LC) office, including participation of a salinity coordinator in the Work Group meetings and a high-level representative at the Forum and Advisory Council meetings.

The Council recognizes that it is difficult, given Reclamation's budget cycle, to make funding recommendations that can influence Reclamation's budget request for the next two fiscal years. Specific to the Basinwide Program Funding, the Council recognizes and appreciates Reclamation's efforts which led to an increase in Basinwide Program funding in FY-2020 nearly to the requested \$10.1M. The Council was then alarmed by indications that the budget may be cut 40% in FY2021. The Council recognizes the efforts of Reclamation staff to smoothly and efficiently implement the Basinwide Program despite yo-yoing appropriations. The Council also recognizes and commends Reclamation's efforts to acquire year-end and other funds to make up for initial appropriation shortfalls.

- The Council requests that Secretarial and Bureau leadership do everything within their power to seek adequate and consistent funding levels. The Council recommends that Reclamation seek ways to maintain funding in FY-2021 and beyond in accordance with the amounts shown in Table 1. Reclamation is requested to give a detailed report on its efforts to secure additional funding at the next Advisory Council meeting.

Reclamation is very aware of the funding issues associated with the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund (LCRBDF). The Forum has created a committee to address these issues, and the Council recommends that Reclamation continue to work with this committee in attempting to identify options and strategies for resolving these issues. The Council wishes to express its appreciation to Reclamation staff who have worked very efficiently within the funding constraints to move the Program forward, and the Council simply requests that Reclamation continue in this vein.

Lastly, relative to funding, the Council recognizes Reclamation's efforts to 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 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.
- The Council requests that Reclamation continue to budget sufficient dollars, independent of the Basinwide Program funding, for O&M activities, planning, operations and administration of the Program.

The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts with the 2019 FOA and looks forward to the implementation of the projects selected thereunder. It has observed over the years Reclamation's efforts to adapt and be even more effective in administering the FOAs. It requests that Reclamation continue to do so. The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts to work with applicants prior to submission of applications so as to create the best projects. The Council asks that Reclamation continue to adapt the FOA by listening to the needs and views of the applying entities. In particular, it notes the increasing opportunities to leverage different funding sources to create broader and more effective projects that benefit the larger community and watershed goals.

- With the 2019 FOA now completed, the Council requests that Reclamation, working with the Forum and its Work Group, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the recent process and create a list of items to be addressed prior to the next FOA.

The Council appreciates the effort in the UC Region to address and improve the contracting issues that have previously faced the Program. It also notes that it was surprised by changes in contracting direction from Denver prohibiting Reclamation from passing off contracts to the State Ag agencies under the FOA as allowed under the Basin States Program and contrary to past practices.

- The Council asks that Reclamation continue to monitor the time and effort required to move contracts forward through its offices and report any concerns or issues to the Council.
- The Council also requests that Reclamation continue to follow up on the issues created by the direction from the Denver contracting office specific to the option of having the State Ag agencies administer selected contracts under the FOA and that it report back its progress to the Council on this matter.

The continued and efficient operation of the PVU is very important to the Council. In the past the Council has expressed its support for the PVU EIS and Alternative Studies efforts and it continues to emphasize its support of this most effective project. The project has been troubled in recent times with seismic concerns, and the Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts to evaluate and minimize these concerns.

- The Council requests that Reclamation continue to implement salinity control at the PVU and that it work closely with the Forum as future operations and plans are formulated.

The Council notes that Reclamation has brought together a capable staff to effectively administer the Program. The Council notes that important to the overall efforts in the past has been an engineering position. This position has now been vacant for several years.

- Though the Council notes that Reclamation has hired several hydrologic engineers in its water quality section, as recommended in recent years, the Council strongly

encourages that this position be filled soon with a capable individual who works solely on the Program

The Forum is in the midst of its triennial review efforts and Reclamation's modeling and other input has been invaluable. As part of those efforts, Reclamation has made significant improvements and updates to its Salinity Economic Impacts Model (SEIM). These efforts are recognized and appreciated.

- Coming out of the contract to update the model, the Council requests that Reclamation work with the Forum's Work Group to identify the next steps in improving our understanding and ability to model impacts of salinity levels.

The Council appreciates Reclamation's leadership in seeking to find improved options for replacement of wildlife values foregone, especially on federal lands where long-term maintenance and management can be realized.

- As in past years, the Council asks that Reclamation continue to work on this effort with NRCS, BLM and the USFWS. Further, the Council requests that Reclamation continue its efforts to quantify mitigation credits and determine the areas to which credits can apply.

Each fall Reclamation seeks input from the involved federal agencies and prepares a Federal Accomplishments Report (FAR), which report is sent to the Advisory Council before its fall meeting.

- The efforts of Reclamation to bring together the FAR each year in advance of the fall meetings is very helpful in the Council's review and evaluation of the Program, and the Council urges that this report continue to be provided.

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 asks Reclamation to respond in writing to recommendations contained in this report by **July 10, 2020**.

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. Creation of a “program” hasn’t always fit within other BLM programs. The Council recognizes and expresses appreciation for the top-to-bottom leadership which BLM is now showing relative to the Congressional charge to BLM. Such leadership is seen by participation in meetings, responses to inquiries, dedication of staff time and funding, commitment to studies, understanding and reporting, and the willingness to think outside the box in regards to integrating salinity control into other BLM programs and objectives.

- The Council recognizes these efforts, expresses appreciation for the shift in emphasis, and encourages BLM to continue on the courses it has laid out.

Two years ago the Council expressed appreciation for BLM’s efforts to complete its *A Framework for Improving the Effectiveness of BLM’s Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (2017-2022)* document.

- The Council again expresses its appreciation for the creation of the document and the vision contained therein and requests that BLM report on how this vision continues to be maintained as various BLM programs and activities are implemented.

BLM is certainly in a time of significant change and transition. BLM’s salinity control funding has historically come through its Soil, Water and Air Program, but has now been moved to the Aquatic Habitat Management Program. In the past two years, Congress has directed that \$2M be spent on efforts specific to salinity control in 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 also appreciates BLM’s efforts to make more money available for salinity control activities through other efforts and funding sources.

- Moving forward, the Council recommends that at least \$2.0 million for the next four fiscal years be set aside for specific salinity control on public lands within the Basin.

- The Council further requests that BLM, working with other federal partners, the Forum or its Work Group, develop a method for receiving input on projects and activities to be funded and a uniform method of reporting each year on its expenditure of these funds such that the Council can evaluate BLM's efforts and provide effective input.

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. This has led to a number of presently ongoing studies in conjunction with ARS and USGS. The Council understands that culmination of these efforts is nearing and is anxious to hear the results of these studies.

- The Council asks that BLM work with the Science Team and the Forum's Work Group in reporting out the results of these studies as they become available. The Council requests and understands that BLM will coordinate with the Work Group to know where studies have been reported (i.e., journals, etc.) and report the status of the overall BLM and ARS efforts, as well as plans moving forward.

As in the past, the Council notes significantly increased efforts by BLM to quantify and report the salinity savings associated with various BLM activities. The Council applauds these efforts. It recognizes that this is no small task.

- The Council recommends that BLM continue to refine the process and then report such to the Science Team and Work Group for peer review and input.

The Council recognizes that reorganization and movement of staff has been long drawn out and difficult. The Council has for many years recommended that BLM's efforts include a salinity coordinator whose assignment would be to work exclusively on Colorado River salinity issues. The Council's vision is that the three implementing agencies, with their coordinators domiciled together, would move ahead as a team through daily interfacing of their coordinators.

- Therefore, in BLM's reorganization efforts the Council requests that BLM consider the above vision. Controlling salt mobilization on BLM administered lands is a

monumental task and the Council requests that BLM 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 recognizes that BLM's organization is being reviewed at a national level. As things change and opportunities present themselves, the Council reiterates its recommendation to have a full-time BLM salinity coordinator tied to Washington and housed in Salt Lake City.

The Council is concerned about the future of the Paradox Valley Unit. Reclamation is working towards making a recommendation for a preferred alternative to replace the current injection well. Depending on the selected alternative, there will be BLM actions to be addressed, particularly with respect to the potential future use of some BLM lands.

- The Council urges BLM to continue to be involved with these issues and facilitate, as part of Interior's team, resolution of a workable brine disposal alternative, even if that requires flexibility with some of BLM's unique priorities. The Council recognizes that review of the Paradox EIS will occur at the Assistant Secretary level and that BLM will provide input thereto. The Council requests that BLM will proactively facilitate potential solutions and that if it sees any issues, it will report such back to the Council.

The Council recognizes the desire to improve the options for the replacement of wildlife values foregone. It appreciates BLM's efforts to find and participate in the establishment of such replacement, especially on federally administered lands where long-term maintenance and management can occur.

- The Council requests that BLM continue to be engaged with Reclamation, NRCS and the USFWS in seeking out and establishing such wildlife areas.

The Council requests a written report responding to each of the Council's recommendations by **July 10, 2020**.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

The Council wants to express its continued appreciation for how responsive USGS is in its science role for the Secretary of the Interior in assisting with moving the Salinity Control Program forward. The Council appreciates the continued coordination and support of the Program provided by USGS with the several individuals involved in assisting with science support. Both the continuity of participation, as well as the ability to bring in specialists when needed, has really provided important strength and understanding to the Program. Participation by USGS on the Science Team, the TAG and Work Group and at Advisory Council and Forum meetings has helped strengthen the overall Program and efforts. Such participation provides input and guidance and helps merge science and implementation.

- The Council asks that USGS continue to participate in Program efforts and work with Reclamation, NRCS, BLM 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.

Continued effective operation of the PVU is critical to the Council. USGS is presently working on four or five efforts, some using Basin States Program dollars and some using PVU O&M dollars, to better define the movement and discharge of brine within the groundwater system. The PVU EIS is approaching completion, yet some of the studies designed to help in alternative analyses have not been completed.

- The Council urges USGS to complete these efforts so that the results can appropriately inform Reclamation and the states on the potential effectiveness of alternatives being considered during the EIS Alternatives Study. The Council asks that as drafts of these reports are prepared, they be shared with the Forum's Work Group so that they can provide review and comment.

The Council recognizes USGS's selection of the Upper Colorado River Basin as the second NGWOS basin. It sees great potential in increased and improved water monitoring and modeling. There are a number of interests and objectives in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

- The Council requests that USGS consider the goals and objectives of the salinity control efforts and integrate these into the design of the increased monitoring instruments and locations. The Council asks that the USGS salinity team act as a liaison between this effort and the Council and the Forum, looking for opportunities to leverage and increase science support of the Program.

The Council recognizes USGS's initiation of the study of the long-term salinity trends in the Upper Basin and appreciates the support thus far. This is a big deal to the overall Program. The Council appreciates the extension of the effort to the Lower Basin to provide uniformity of analysis of trends in the system.

- As this critical effort moves forward, the Council requests that USGS provide frequent reports to the engineers and scientists on the Forum's Work Group, including the review of draft findings and reports.

The Council has given its support to detailed investigative efforts by USGS of the Pah Tempe Springs. The Council appreciates USGS's efforts and insight in proposing the final study to finish characterizing the fault zone which leads to brine discharge to the Virgin River.

- The Council recognizes that this effort has stalled a little with delays associated with finding a willing driller to complete the required testing and requests that USGS renew efforts to move the study forward and report to the Council on accomplishments.

The Council recognizes USGS's critical role on the Science Team in identifying Program science needs and their role in scoping out potential studies and performing many of these studies. These efforts are much appreciated. USGS has performed a number of other studies for the Program which have guided thinking and implementation activities. The USGS's role and efforts are recognized by the Council and are much appreciated.

The Council wishes to thank USGS for the priority it gives to funding the basic stream gaging program on the Colorado River.

- The Council 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, review and study functions by **July 10, 2020**.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The Council recognizes that many of its recommendations to the USFWS are on a continuing basis and don't change significantly from year to year. It 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.

As noted in prior years, the Council again notes its appreciation for the tables provided by USFWS in the FAR. It also appreciates the efforts of the Service to review the M&E reports. The Council appreciates USFWS's efforts to review and approve off-site replacement efforts and concurs with USFWS that such efforts are better than receiving no replacement.

- The Council finds the review and tabulations of wildlife values foregone replacement efforts most helpful and requests that the Council continue to be informed each year in the FAR as to the effectiveness and current status of these efforts.

In the past few years USFWS has participated with other agencies in seeking and reviewing potentially larger, more permanent mitigation opportunities, including ones on federally administered lands. The Council recognizes USFWS's role in the successful (and notably under budget) efforts with a project in the Grand Valley and believes that this could be a good model moving forward. It recognizes that USFWS is now involved with others in a potential project at the Olsen Reservoir. The Council appreciates and applauds these

efforts as a potentially improved way to provide replacement for fish and wildlife values foregone.

- The Council would ask that USFWS continue to not only be a participant in these activities, but that it be proactive and a leader 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 continues to recognize 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 encourages USFWS to 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 **July 10, 2020**.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Council recognizes the key and essential role that NRCS has played and continues to play in reducing the salt load of the Colorado River and its tributaries, creating local environmental benefits as well as benefits for downstream agricultural and M&I users. NRCS has been a consistent and very productive partner in the effort. Providing these benefits is the result of a coordinated effort between the Colorado, Utah and Wyoming state NRCS offices in the Upper Basin and also the cooperation they have provided when working with other federal agencies, the TAG, the Forum and the Work Group.

The Council appreciates the level of funding made available to the salinity control effort through EQIP despite the myriad of demands placed on program managers in allocating limited EQIP funds. 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 2017 Review for the Department of Agriculture. The Council notes and expresses appreciation for the allocation of EQIP funding in FY-2019 consistent with the Three-Year Funding Plan.

- The Council recommends that NRCS continue to allocate salinity EQIP funds to the state offices consistent with the State Conservationists' Three-Year Funding Plan.

The Council also recognizes that much of NRCS's past success in implementing salinity control comes from efforts beyond simply servicing EQIP contracts. It comes from talented staff working with producers in properly operating and managing on-farm improvements. A USGS study of NRCS data over a number of years in the Grand Valley shows a wide range in effectiveness derived from implementation and maintenance of the same practices, confirming the importance of the continual need for training and assisting producers.

- The Council requests that NRCS continue to recognize this need and provide sufficient staff and funding, including sufficient CTA dollars and other non-EQIP dollars, to meet this critical need.

The Council believes that it is the dedication, coupled with effective and hard work of NRCS personnel, which has made the NRCS salinity control program such a success. The Council appreciates the attentiveness of NRCS Washington staff in the Program's success. The Council also recognizes and appreciates the dedicated attention that the three State Conservationists have given the Program and it invites them to continue to frequently participate in Program meetings, discussions and activities and provide input, expertise and guidance as we move the overall Program forward.

- The Council simply requests that NRCS continues to remain an engaged and proactive partner as it has in the past.

The Council very strongly believes that the efforts of NRCS's Salinity Control Program Coordinator have been critical to the Program's successes. Not only has the Coordinator been effective in coordinating and unifying NRCS implementation of the Program, but he has also been extremely helpful in providing input and expertise in the overall Program implementation, working cooperatively with the other agencies. Since the retirement of NRCS's longtime coordinator several years ago, the Council has urged NRCS to quickly act to fill this position. NRCS has now acted to fill the role with two qualified individuals.

Thank-you!

- Now that they are onboard, the Council recommends that the coordinators be given the freedom and resources to focus on salinity control efforts throughout the states, representing and being involved in all state offices and coordinating with other agencies and the States on implementation of the Program.

The Council appreciates NRCS's efforts to control salinity in a cost-effective manner. Historically, the Council has urged NRCS to pursue salinity control first in established salinity control areas before going to other parts of the Basin to expend salinity EQIP funds. It was believed that this practice would create opportunities for the most cost-effective

contracts. NRCS has alerted the Council that contracts in some of the approved salinity areas may have increased such that it might not always be as cost effective as other areas within the Basin.

- Therefore, the Council requests that NRCS provide to the Forum, its Work Group and the Council a comparative review of the cost-effectiveness in the approved project areas over time. Further, it is requested that NRCS, working with the Forum's Work Group, review and study the costs and merits of replacements and upgrades in the salinity areas. This would include a review of the future options associated with systems installed previously by NRCS and which are now reaching or have surpassed their design life. The Council recognizes that this is an on-going effort.

Implementation of the Salinity Control Program has been adaptive over the years as we have needed to adjust to changes in funding, legislation, policies, practices and producer needs. The Council is aware that changes are under review in the relationship between the technical assistance and division of labor being provided by NRCS and the state ag agency personnel with Basin States Program (BSP) dollars.

- The Council asks that NRCS continue to stay engaged and provide counsel and guidance in this effort as the most effective and beneficial options for implementation of Program objectives are evaluated and then implemented.

Due to a number of factors, present Program implementation has de-emphasized the role and number of EQIP-ineligible contracts referred to Reclamation for funding consideration. That said, the Council believes that there will continue to be a limited number of such contracts which are cost effective and strategic to overall Program implementation objectives. The Council appreciates NRCS's commitment to improve the process.

- To the extent that such worthy, yet EQIP-ineligible contracts are received, reviewed and batched by NRCS, the Council requests that they be forwarded (handed off) to Reclamation by April 1st each year and that NRCS provide to Reclamation any evaluations or supporting information it has developed for these contracts so that it can quickly, in conjunction with the State ag agencies, determine which, if any, of the

projects will be funded with BSP funds (see also discussion on this matter in the Reclamation section).

The Council recognizes the vital role of 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 are adequately staffed. Recognizing the regional importance of the Salinity Control Program, the Council urges the Secretary to provide sufficient staff hiring allowances such that the District offices are adequately staffed. The Council is concerned that while technical service providers may meet a short-term need, long-term adequate staffing is essential to success in meeting Program objectives.

- The Council requests that NRCS make it a priority to provide sufficient staffing to move the Salinity Control Program forward and that it report on such efforts to the Council.

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 in the past. 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 **July 10, 2020**.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

The Council continues to appreciate EPA's determination that Region 8 will be the coordinating region for the Salinity Control Program. The Council is pleased with the representative from this region and appreciates his participation at meetings, as well as the materials and responses provided, including EPA's annual write-up in the FAR.

The Council expresses appreciation to EPA for its involvement in, and assistance with the Forum's triennial review process to review and update its *Water Quality Standards for Salinity, Colorado River System (2017 Review)* and asks that EPA continue to help shepherd the state standards through to approval.

- The Council requests that updates be given each year by EPA on the status of its efforts to approve such standards.

The Council also appreciates the involvement of EPA in water quality control efforts by the Tribes in the Colorado River Basin as they set water quality standards.

- The Council requests an update from EPA on the number of tribes which have received TAS designation and if they have adopted the Forum's policies into their NPDES rules. Anything else on implementation of water quality standards by the Tribes would be helpful.

The Council recognizes the importance of the PVU in the overall efforts to improve the water quality of the Colorado River and continues to encourage EPA's participation in the PVU EIS efforts. It also recognizes and appreciates EPA's previous commitments to fast tracking of a UIC permit, if the current injection well were to fail before an appropriate brine disposal alternative has been identified.

The Council has found that Region 8 of the EPA has been most responsive to issues it has been asked to address. The Council would appreciate a response to the above comments by **July 10, 2020**.

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION (IBWC)

While the Council's responsibilities are for activities occurring above Imperial Dam, the Council wishes to express its appreciation for the efforts and the activities of IBWC, particularly as it deals with sensitive salinity matters. The Council encourages IBWC to continue its coordination with the Council, the Forum and the states on issues affecting the salinity of the Colorado River as it crosses the international boundary.

The Council senses there may be a need to better inform Mexican officials and water users of the benefits to them associated with 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.

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 2019 and looks forward to providing a framework for future coordination and consultation. The Council requests that written responses to this report be provided by **July 10, 2020**. Responses should be sent to the Council's Chairman, Mr. Bill Hasencamp, at the following address:

Bill Hasencamp, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
P.O. Box 54153
Los Angeles, CA 90054-0153

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

August 31, 2018

**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 (43 U.S.C. § 1594), Public Law 93-320, Title II, as amended by Public Laws 98-569, 104-20, 104-27, 106-459, and 110-246, and is regulated by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended (5 U.S.C. Appendix 2).
3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities.** The Council provides 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.

All current and future Executive Orders, Secretary's Orders, and Secretarial memos should be included for discussion and recommendations, where applicable, as they are released. At the conclusion of each meeting or shortly thereafter, provide a detailed recommendation report, including meeting minutes, to the Designated Federal Officer (DFO).

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 EPA through the DFO.
6. **Support.** Support for the Council will be provided by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (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 Federal staff years support.
8. **Designated Federal Officer.** The DFO is the Colorado River Salinity Control Program Manager with Reclamation, and 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 be 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 and alternates 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 Council or subcommittee deliberations or votes relating to a specific party matter before the Department or its bureaus and offices including a lease, license, permit, contract, grant, claim, agreement, or litigation in which the member or the entity the member represents 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. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO.

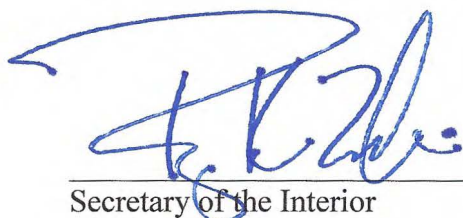
15. **Recordkeeping.** The records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees of the Council, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2, and other approved Agency records disposition schedules. These records shall be available for public inspection and 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 05 2018

Date Signed

AUG 31 2018

Date Filed

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

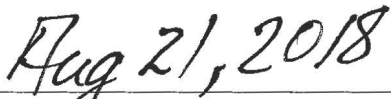
**Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council**

Charter

Counterpart Signatory Page



Secretary of Agriculture



Date Signed

AUG 31 2018

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

Date Signed

AUG 31 2018

Date Filed

Attachment B

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

December 31, 2019

ARIZONA

Clint Chandler
Phoenix, Arizona

Krista Osterberg
Phoenix, Arizona

Suzanne Ticknor
Phoenix, Arizona

COLORADO

Rebecca Mitchell
Denver, Colorado

Pat Pfaltzgraff
Denver, Colorado

David W. Robbins
Denver, Colorado

UTAH

James Harris
Salt Lake City, Utah

Todd Adams
Salt Lake City, Utah

Gawain Snow
Vernal, Utah

CALIFORNIA

Bill Hasencamp
Los Angeles, California

Tanya Trujillo
Glendale, California

NEVADA

Andrew Burns
Las Vegas, Nevada

Sara Price
Las Vegas, Nevada

WYOMING

Chad Espenscheid
Big Piney, Wyoming

Patrick T. Tyrrell
Cheyenne, Wyoming

David Waterstreet
Cheyenne, Wyoming

NEW MEXICO

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

Rolf Schmidt-Petersen
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Attachment C

Federal Responses to the 2018 Advisory Council Report



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:

MAY 08 2019

UC-240
2.4.1.06

Mr. Eric Millis, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity
Control Advisory Council
1594 West North Temple, Suite 310
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6201

Subject: Reclamation's Responses to Specific Recommendations From the Colorado River
Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council's 2018 Annual Report

Dear Chairman Millis:

On behalf of Commissioner Brenda Burman, I am responding to your letter of March 27, 2019, regarding the 2018 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 by telephone at (801) 524-3753 or by e-mail at kjacobson@usbr.gov or by TTY at (800) 877-8339.

Sincerely,

Brent Rhees
Regional Director

Enclosure

cc: See next page

cc: Bureau of Reclamation
Designated Federal Officer
Mr. Kib Jacobson
125 South State Street, Room 8100
Salt Lake City, UT 84138

Central Arizona Water Conservancy District
Chairman, Technical Advisory Group
Mr. Patrick Dent
P.O. Box 43020
Phoenix, AZ 85080

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

**Reclamation's Responses to Specific Recommendations from the
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council's 2018 Annual Report**

Paradox Valley Unit (PVU)

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, General Subjects: The Council requests that the Secretary of the Interior and Assistant Secretary take specific stewardship in seeing this effort through to completion.

Response: Reclamation as the lead agency and the BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, and USGS as cooperators are working together to complete the Alternatives Studies and EIS for the PVU and to have a Record of Decision (ROD) issued in the summer of 2020. The leadership of these agencies and those within the Department of the Interior responsible for the ROD are aware of the process and their roles in the process.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council now recognizes that if the schedule is delayed further it could be caught up and lost in the 2020 Presidential race. Therefore, it urges that Reclamation make every effort to meet a schedule which has a ROD issued in the summer of 2020.

Response: Completion of the FEIS/ROD is currently on schedule, with the ROD scheduled for the 3rd Quarter of 2020.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council appreciates Reclamation's commitment to the ongoing EIS efforts for the PVU and also encourages it to plan for and secure the needed funding for the planning, design and implementation of the selected alternative(s) after issuance of the Record of Decision in 2020.

Response: Reclamation continues to consider completion of the FEIS/ROD process and implementation of an action alternative in the budget formulation process.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council also requests that Reclamation work with the states on funding options, including potential phasing for implementation of the selected alternative.

Response: Reclamation understands the great benefit of working with the Basin States in the developing and pursuing funding options for the implementation of a selected alternative for the PVU. Reclamation desires that this item be included on Advisory Council meeting agendas for the next few years.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - 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 effort. The Council requests that Reclamation also address anticipated funding needs for implementation of the preferred alternative in its future budget formulation.

Response: See Response above.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior – Table 1, Notes: 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.

Response: See Response above.

Science Team

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - General Subjects: The Council also appreciates the efforts of the multi-agency 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.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: 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.

Response: Reclamation also has found the efforts of the Science Team to be very valuable and will continue to support, staff, and convene the Science Team.

Pah Tempe (La Verkin) Springs

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council appreciates Reclamations efforts in this regard with its memo report and requests that it continue to support the investigation of a potential project at Pah Tempe.

Response: Reclamation's Lower and Upper Colorado Regions continue to support the study of saline loading originating from the Pah Tempe (La Verkin) Springs. Both Regions look forward to understanding the results of the ongoing study prior to consideration of a project.

Progress Reports

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council appreciates the value of these reports. The Council notes that Progress Report No. 25 was finalized this past year and it urges Reclamation to work with the Forum's Work Group on the next report to assure consistency in reporting.

Response: Reclamation agrees with the Council that the Progress Reports be coordinated with the Work group and Forum so that there is a consistency of data, especially with the Forum's Triennial Review. At times there may be some discrepancy in the data between the Progress Reports and Triennial Reviews since these two reports are on different reporting cycles.

Progress Report No. 25 has been accepted by the Commissioner of Reclamation and

approved by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary).

Progress Reports Nos. 21-25 are available on the web site;
<https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity>

Funding - Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund (LCRBDF)

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council would also like to express its appreciation to Reclamation in its efforts to re-evaluate the repayment history and appropriately apply repayment dollars to obligations which first become due. This is a good example of Reclamation's efforts to collaboratively and resourcefully move the Program forward and the Council simply requests that Reclamation continue in this vein.

Response: Reclamation acknowledges that the collaboration that exists between Reclamation and the Council has made the Salinity Control Program a very successful program.

Management and Budget Recommendations, Department of the Interior – Reclamation: 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-2019.

Response: Since FY-2014 the Forum and Council has requested of Reclamation that the approximately \$1M annual advance repayment for the original Units not be made so that these funds could be expended on projects in the Basin States Program and help reduce the Accrual. Reclamation agreed to the short-term financial management approach of the LCRBDF with the understanding that the Forum and Council would explore options that would allow the LCRBDF to meet its cost-share requirements and take steps to implement a solution. To date the long-term Accrual issue remains unresolved.

Also, Reclamation appreciates the Council's recommended temporary funding level expenditures from the LCRBDF in FY-2019, FY-2020, and FY-2021. Reclamation, in consultation with the Council, will try to obtain the funding levels recommended by the Council.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior – Reclamation: 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.

Response: Reclamation will continue to work with the Council, Forum, and all federal

agencies to keep the LCRBDF from going into deficit. However, Reclamation encourages the Council to keep the funding shortfall of the LCRBDF an agenda item until it is resolved.

Funding

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior -

Reclamation: It requests that Secretarial and Bureau leadership do everything within its power to seek adequate and consistent funding levels. The Council recommends that Reclamation seek increased appropriations in FY-2020, FY-2021, and FY-2022 in accordance with Table 1, especially as we begin a new Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) schedule. It is noted that the requested amounts have been decreased due to the very cost-effective projects selected in the recent FOAs. Reclamation is requested to give a detailed report on its efforts to secure additional funding at the next Advisory Council meeting.

Response: Reclamation appreciates the support the Basin States provide to budget funding requests for the 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 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 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, Department - Reclamation:

The Council recommends that Reclamation not reduce this appropriation any further through budgetary manipulations and that, in fact, it attempts to increase this appropriation by reprogramming any Reclamation-wide excess FY-2019 appropriations into the Basinwide Program prior to the end of the fiscal year. The Basinwide has proven its ability to effectively and efficiently utilize such end-of-the-year funding.

Response: Funding for the Basinwide Program for FY-2019 is currently, \$8,000,000, it was at \$6,000,000 on October 1st, 2018. The Program will request up to 15% of unobligated transfer funds from the UC Region.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department - Reclamation:

The Council recommends that as the FY-2020 budget process is finalized, Reclamation make every attempt to budget \$10,100,000 to the Basinwide Program and that as it begins budgeting for FY-2021 it budgets the same amount.

Response: Reclamation currently has \$10,000,000 in the President's Budget in fiscal year 2020.

MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS, Department - Reclamation:

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.

Response: The budget for the Colorado River Water Quality Improvement Program has increased to \$680,000 for FY-2019 and for FY-2020.

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 Tables 1 and 2. The Council requests that in their responses, federal agencies specifically comment on funding for these non-construction activities.

Response: In FY-2018 for operation, maintenance, monitoring, and technical assistance of the salinity units of Grand Valley, PVU, and McElmo Creek, Reclamation expended appropriations of \$1,812,061, \$3,059,141, and \$524,240, respectively. In FY-2019, \$2,250,000, \$4,240,000, and \$618,000 have been appropriated, respectively. In FY-2020 the following amounts have been requested, respectively, \$1,650,000, \$2,967,000, and \$502,000. Reclamation feels that the units are being adequately funded to operate, maintain, monitor, and provide technical assistance.

Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council is looking forward to the 2019 FOA. It has observed over the years Reclamation's efforts to adapt and be even more effective in administering the FOAs. It requests that Reclamation continue to do so.

Response: Reclamation will continue to adapt to changing Department policies and requirements that affect the FOA. The anticipated FOA was submitted, November 2018, for review, to receive a Department waiver for the FOA. This is a new requirement and Reclamation will now anticipate this process into the foreseeable future.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior – Reclamation: One issue which has been raised is the variability materials prices, particularly pipe prices, during the window of project implementation. It asks that Reclamation review and considered this issue in its implementation of the FOA.

Response: Reclamation encourages all applicants to build future inflation of materials into a project's cost estimate. Reclamation has heard this concern and will now allow and encourage applicants to add up to 10% contingency on material line items only for the project cost estimate. All costs must be proposed in the application and will be factored into

the cost per ton of salt calculation. No additional funding can be given to applicants, for material increases, after the project has been selected in the FOA.

Staffing

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council notes that the Upper Colorado Region had brought together a capable staff to effectively administer the Program. The Council notes that important to the overall efforts in the past has been an engineering position. This position has now been vacant for several years. As recommended for the past several years, the Council strongly encourages that this position be filled quickly.

Response: Reclamation agrees with the Council that the Upper Colorado Region has brought together an effective staff in the Water Quality Group. The duties of the vacated GS-12 engineering position have been distributed among a GS-12 Physical Scientist and three Hydrologic Engineers, a GS-13 and 2 GS-11s, of the Group. The 2 GS-11s were hired after the GS-12 engineering position was vacated. The Group now has more engineers than when the position was vacated. The three Hydrologic Engineers are gaining experience each year and contributing more and more to the Salinity Control Program.

Also, experienced engineers from the Provo and Western Colorado area offices assist us during the FOA and the Application Review Committee process. Two FOAs have been issued since the engineering position has been vacated and the processes have been successfully completed.

Contracting Process

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: As it did last year, the Council requests that the Secretary review these issues and report back to the Council on efforts to streamline the contracting processes at the Departmental level to allow for efficient implementation of the Program. With a new Funding Opportunity Announcement coming out this year, the Council requests that the Department act quickly to cure issues with the contracting process. The Council also requests that Reclamation continue to monitor the time and effort required to move contracts forward through its offices and report such to the Council.

Response: Reclamation continually works with all levels in Reclamation and in DOI in the agreement/modification process to streamline the process for efficient implementation. All levels understand the importance of timely approval of agreements and modifications for the Salinity Control Program. To accommodate the waiver process and to minimize impacts on the timely completion of salinity projects, Reclamation allows plenty of lead time for agreement execution. Reclamation has also begun obligating funding to entities in the last quarter of the FY so that the entities have sufficient funding to begin installation of salinity control measures in the first quarter of the new FY (October, November, and December)

Habitat Replacement

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council appreciates Reclamation's leadership in seeking to find improved options for replacement of wildlife values foregone, especially on federal lands where long-term maintenance and management can be realized. The Council asks that Reclamation continue to work on this effort with NRCS, BLM and the USFWS. Further, the Council requests that Reclamation continue its efforts to quantify mitigation credits and determine the areas to which credits can apply.

Response: Reclamation continues to look for options to develop replacement habitat values. At the present time Reclamation is working with Federal agencies, state agencies, and private entities on a property in Utah and a property in Colorado where there is good potential for developing habitat values and long-term maintenance and management can be realized.

Lakes Powell and Mead Salinity Models

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: The Council recognizes that Reclamation's two-dimensional salinity model for Lake Powell and Lake Mead have greatly improved in the past several years. The Council requests that Reclamation work with the Forum's Work Group on options to more widely report model results.

Response: Reclamation commits to work with the Forum's Work Group on options to more widely report water quality and salinity models results.

Charter

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, General Subjects: The Council herein requests that the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and EPA all get on board such that the Charter is renewed in July 2020. The Council recognizes that it is somewhat unique from other FACA committees and so it requests that the Charter stay consistent with the Congressional mandate to the Council and that no additional provisions be added which would limit the Council's effectiveness in meeting its role in moving the Program forward.

Response: Reclamation will begin in January 2020 to have the Charter renewed in July 2020. This will include notifying contacts in the Department of Agriculture and EPA when to expect the Charter package for surnaming and approval in their agencies. Reclamation will keep the Council advised of proposed language changes in the Charter. Reclamation will also advise Departmental staff of new language that may conflict with the Congressional mandate of the Council.

Federal Accomplishments Report (FAR)

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, Department of the Interior - Reclamation: Each fall Reclamation seeks input from the involved federal agencies and

prepares a Federal Accomplishments Report (FAR), which report is sent to the Advisory Council before its fall meeting. This is very helpful and the Council urges that this report continue to be provided.

Response: Reclamation will continue, as it has in the past, to provide the FAR to the Advisory Council before its fall meeting.



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



In Reply Refer To:
7240 (280)

Mr. Eric Millis, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control
Advisory Council
P.O. Box 146201
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-6201

Dear Mr. Millis:

Thank you for your recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Advisory Council's 2018 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (CRBSCP). As requested, this letter addresses the Council's recommendations to the BLM.

General Subjects

Recommendation

“It is most important that all involved Department of the Interior agencies consider the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) replacement alternative effort as a Department-wide effort and that BLM, USFWS and USGS become partners with Reclamation in moving the project ahead.”

Response

The BLM is a cooperating agency in the PVU project tasked with land use decisions and continues our active engagement with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and other cooperating agencies to identify and address all issues that fall within BLM's public lands management mission. Over the last 18 months, the BLM has contributed greater than 500 hours of staff time from multiple levels of the agency to the PVU Environmental Impact Statement. This includes participating in cooperating agency meetings and discussions, as well as, providing technical and managerial guidance on BLM specific regulations and policies, and environmental land use and analysis issues. The BLM has been a cooperating agency since 2012 and involved in the land management aspect of the PVU project since 2014.

Recommendation

“The Council is also pleased with BLM’s continuing effort to study and understand salt mobilization processes on rangelands. With significant seed money for these efforts having come from the limited Basin States Program funds, the Council is hopeful that BLM...will now lead out in these efforts both monetarily and in executing the needed studies.”

Response

The BLM’s contribution toward understanding salinity transport processes is occurring at multiple scales (plot, watershed, and regional) and on the several mobile pathways. The BLM continues to collaborate and leverage funds with other federal agencies. As stated in the fiscal year (FY) 2018 Federal Accomplishments Report (FAR), BLM salinity funded USGS \$250,000 over two years for the long term trends of salinity in the Basin. The BLM studies are ongoing and has plans to share the physical analyses and model simulation results. The BLM is looking forward to the trends and results of the salinity long-term studies.

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Recommendation

“The Council now requests a follow-up presentation [to the Spring 2018 presentation of A Framework for Improving the Effectiveness of BLM’s Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (2017-2022)] at its Spring 2019 meeting on how the recommendations contained therein are being implemented and their impact on BLM’s salinity control efforts.”

Response

The BLM will plan a presentation on “A Framework for Improving the Effectiveness of BLM’s Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (2017-2022)” at the Spring-Summer 2019 meeting.

Recommendation

“The Council understands that there have been issues with accounting for expended salinity funds and is yet desirous of a uniform, peer-reviewed method on how to report how the dollars were expended, along with estimates of salt savings therefrom (either qualitative or quantitative). The Council again asks that BLM work with the Science Team and the Work Group, respectively, on this request and an appropriate reporting format.”

Response

The process of funding accountability is extremely important to the BLM. Since several programs use salinity funds, this task can be complex. The BLM is currently looking for solutions to incorrectly applied project codes, which present tracking challenges. The salinity

coordinator and the Washington Office continue to emphasize consistent use to all recipients of salinity funds. With the FY 2018 FAR, the BLM has used consistent language regarding salt retained on BLM lands and has used the same salinity equation since 2013. As a member of the Science Team and Work Group, the BLM continues to share their salinity savings numbers across the terrestrial landscape in support of the Salinity Act and other partners, as BLM continues to reduce salinity transport terrestrially and in streams within the CRB.

Recommendation

“The Council requests and understands that BLM will coordinate with the Work Group to know where studies have been reported (i.e., journals, etc.) and report the status of the overall BLM and ARS efforts, as well as plans moving forward.”

Response

The BLM has provided and will continue to provide all of the peer-reviewed journal publications and other documents to date. The ARS-Reno portion of the rainfall-runoff plot collection has ended. Reclamation informed the BLM of receipt of the final report; the BLM has not received the final report from ARS. The BLM will continue to update the Work Group as needed.

Recommendation

“It [the Council] noted Figure 16 (page 52) in the 2017 FAR shows a correlation between salinity and sediment loading that is generally accepted. The Council requested that in their studies BLM independently verify and quantify this generally accepted relationship...The Council reiterates such request.”

Response

The ARS presented their response to Figure 16 with RHEM model simulations based on the data from seven sites (2 Reclamation, 5 BLM) that address this comment (Science Team and Work Group meeting 2018). Final reports to Reclamation and the BLM are due by mid-2019. The BLM continues to collect data at multiple scales that will contribute to the proper demonstration of the response to the Council requests. The data collection will occur over several years and will be reported when the analyses is complete. The BLM will use the BLM-adapted and worldwide accepted APEX model to demonstrate this concept based on the data collected throughout the CRB.

Recommendation

“The Council continues to reiterate its recommendation that BLM select a salinity coordinator whose assignment would be to work exclusively on Colorado River salinity issues. The Council’s vision is that the three implementing agencies, with their coordinators domiciled together, would move ahead as a team through daily interfacing of their coordinators. Controlling salt mobilization on BLM administered lands is a monumental task and the

Council requests that BLM continually evaluate staffing needs, ensuring that program goals and objectives are addressed and adequately coordinated with the activities of the other federal agencies.”

Response

The BLM is committed to support the Colorado Salinity effort, including continued efforts to collaborate with other federal agencies, and enhancing the effectiveness of the program. The BLM supports the Council's request in part with a full-time salinity coordinator, located along with other scientific staff, at the National Operations Center (NOC) in Denver, Colorado. At the NOC, the salinity coordinator integrates with senior BLM scientists while providing technical support to the BLM staff nationally and coordinates with other agencies as appropriate.

Recommendation

“The Council urges BLM to continue to be involved with the PVU alternatives and facilitate, as part of Interior’s team, resolution of a workable brine disposal alternative...The Council requests that BLM will proactively facilitate potential solutions and that if it sees any issues, it will report such back to the Council.”

Response

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office has been working with Reclamation on the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) Replacement Project since Reclamation initiated preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in September 2012. Reclamation is the lead agency for EIS development and project construction. The BLM will continue to work with Reclamation to identify workable project alternatives and help resolve related issues. The BLM will take actions to support project implementation when Reclamation completes the EIS and issues a Record of Decision.

Recommendation

“The Council recognizes the desire to improve the options for the replacement of wildlife values foregone...The Council requests that BLM continue to be engaged with Reclamation, NRCS, and the USFWS in seeking out and establishing such wildlife areas.”

Response

The BLM has been extremely active in establishing the Habitat Replacement on BLM Lands program with the other agencies under the Salinity Act. The BLM anticipates future collaboration and determination of maintenance and responsibility issues.

Management and Budget Recommendations

Recommendation

“The Council requests that BLM continue to fund projects in the Colorado River Basin regardless of which program is ultimately used as the vehicle. This past year BLM, through a manager’s discretion, set aside more than the \$1.5 million directed by Congress for specific salinity control activities within the Colorado River Basin. “

Response

The BLM strives each year to meet the congressionally directed amount requested. In FY 2018, the salinity project funds identified matched the congressional requirement of \$1.5 million and received additional funds from BLM’s Soil, Water, and Air Management program.

Recommendation

“Moving forward, the Council recommends that at least \$2.0 million for the next four fiscal years be set aside for specific 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.”

Response

Congress has provided appropriations language for FY 2019 directing the BLM to expend \$2.0 million through the Aquatic Habitat Management program to support ongoing implementation of the CRBSCP. The BLM does not anticipate the creation of a separate budget line item for the CRBSCP. Continued funding for salinity control will depend on the Administration’s priorities and the availability of appropriated funds.

Recommendation

“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. The NRCS’s Salinity Coordinator has been most helpful as this effort has moved ahead in the past.”

Response

Improving ground cover and plant diversity on BLM rangelands are expected to increase soil stability and reduce erosion. The BLM looks forward to collaborating with the NRCS and ARS to support the investigation of techniques to decrease the salt loading from grazing lands.

Thank you for your support and recommendations. The BLM will continue efforts to make measurable progress toward reducing salinity transport within the Colorado River Basin. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact McKinley Ben Miller, Acting Division Chief for Environmental Quality and Protection, at mbmiller@blm.gov or (202) 912-7165.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leah Baker".

for Leah Baker
Acting Assistant Director
Resources and Planning

cc: Kib Jacobson
Program Manager
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program
125 S. State Street, Room 8100
Salt Lake City, UT 84138

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



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Colorado Ecological Services

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/R6/ES CO

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Denver, Colorado 80225-0486

Western Slope:
445 W. Gunnison Avenue
Suite 240
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-5711

ES/CO: BR/Salinity
TAILS 06E24100-2019-CPA-0035

May 1, 2019

Eric Millis, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
1594 West North Temple, Suite 310
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

Dear Mr. Millis:

We have reviewed the Advisory Council Annual Report (Report) on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program-2018, and offer the following response to comments addressed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

The Service participates in the Salinity Control Program by providing technical assistance on fish and wildlife habitat impact assessment, restoration, and management, through implementation of Federal statutes including the Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection 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 of Reclamation (Reclamation) under Section 7 of the ESA regarding water depletions associated with piping projects, which affect the endangered fish in the Colorado River Basin. Several other listed species occupy wetlands and riparian areas, such as the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) and Ute ladies'-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), which can be affected by projects related to salinity control. We also continue to consult with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Reclamation on both salinity control and wildlife replacement projects that may impact listed species such as these and their critical habitats.

In your report you acknowledge the role of the Service in finding, reviewing, and supporting viable wildlife habitat replacement projects, as well as reviewing and tabulating replacement acres within each salinity control unit. We will continue these activities and assist the other agencies in moving the Salinity Control Program forward. We will continue to work with Reclamation and NRCS to come up with habitat replacement plans that all parties, including

state wildlife management agencies, agree will provide long term habitat replacement.

We continue to recognize that there is a need to consider “off-site” projects to be able to fully replace wildlife values foregone in several salinity control units. Because it has been challenging for NRCS and Reclamation to come up with replacement projects with willing landowners, the Service continues to remain flexible and will allow some off-site replacement to be credited to designated salinity control units. As noted in your Report, the Advisory Council and the Service would rather have something on the ground and be proportional and concurrent, than to restrict wildlife replacement opportunities for only on-site replacement.

Last year the Service and Reclamation updated the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Procedures to add clarity and flexibility for habitat replacement projects. The updated procedures facilitate habitat scoring for complex and innovative habitat enhancement/replacement projects such as that contemplated for Olsen Reservoir, within the Price-San Rafael salinity control unit, and the Price River downstream. The Salinity Control Coordinator has been, and will continue to be, directly involved with the habitat replacement component of this complex, multi-year, multi-agency effort.

The Service continues to participate as a cooperating agency in the evaluation of alternatives for salt control at the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU), including the review of alternatives involving impacts to migratory birds from evaporation ponds and potential impacts to listed species (e.g., Gunnison sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*)) from deep well injection. The Service considers itself part of the Interior team charged with finding the best solution to the future of salt control at the PVU while also minimizing impacts to trust resources.

The Service will continue to provide the Salinity Control Forum and Advisory Council updates on the latest relevant developments with regards to the MBTA and the ESA. And we will continue to work with the Federal partners to address fish and wildlife values forgone and assist with meeting their mitigation goals. Please contact Creed Clayton, acting Salinity Control Coordinator, on any wildlife habitat related issues at (970) 628-7187.

Sincerely,

J. Creed Clayton

acting for

Ann Timberman

Western Slope Supervisor

cc: 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



United States Department of the Interior

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

MAY 01 2019

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 101
GS19000645

Mr. Eric Millis, Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
P.O. Box 146201
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-6201

Dear Mr. Millis:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council's comments and recommendations presented in the 2018 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (CRBSCP). We appreciate the Council's recognition of the responsiveness of USGS science support to CRBSCP information needs. We look forward to continuing to work with the CRBSCP to provide data, interpretation and analysis to facilitate the effective implementation of the Program.

We appreciate the Council's emphasis on timely results from USGS investigations. We continue to work on completing and delivering results from the modeling effort at the Paradox Valley Unit (PVU) in Colorado. These data and analyses will be conveyed to the CRBSCP as well as the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) PVU staff and their Alternative Study Environmental Impact Study Team to assist with understanding the feasibility and efficiency of potential control measures. The USGS continues to work on investigations related to the fault zone near Pah Tempe Hot Springs in an effort to characterize the hydrogeologic factors associated with the spring complex. The second phase of drilling at Pah Tempe Hot Springs has been delayed due to difficulties associated with finding a driller. The USGS and Reclamation will continue to work closely with the Washington County Water Conservancy District to complete the effort to drill additional wells at the site. The USGS initiated an assessment of long-term salinity trends in the Upper Colorado River Basin as part of a three-year study to investigate driving mechanisms for variation in salinity loading to the Colorado River through time. Preliminary results for long-term trends observed at streamgages located in the Upper Colorado River Basin were presented to the CRBSCP in October 2018. The results of the first phase of this investigation will be published in 2019. We will continue to work with the CRBSCP, as well as Federal and State agencies, as work begins to identify causes of salinity trends.

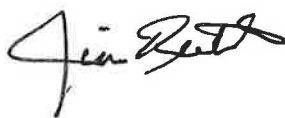
We encourage the Council to communicate with Mr. Tom Marston, Investigations Chief at the USGS Utah Water Science Center and current USGS representative to the Forum, whenever it

wishes to be briefed on USGS activities in support of the CRBSCP. We will be glad to report out on progress and results, as appropriate, at any stage of the work.

The USGS will continue to be an active participant in the Salinity Control Program Science Team and recognizes the benefit of that participation in the development of collaborative and relevant research in support of CRBSCP activities. In particular we recognize the importance of long-term data collection to the CRBSCP and 20-gage network in providing key data for the management of salinity in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

Again, 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 Mr. Tom Marston (801) 908-5030, or tmarston@usgs.gov.

Sincerely,



Jim Reilly
Director

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



MAY 01 2019

Mr. Eric Millis
Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
Post Office Box 146201
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114

Dear Mr. Millis:

Thank you for your letter of March 27, 2019, and the enclosed 2018 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program.

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 Colorado River Basin salinity control activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Lohr".

Matthew Lohr
Chief

Enclosure

cc: (w/enclosure)
Mr. Don A. Barnett
Executive Director
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum
106 West 500 South, Suite 101
Bountiful, Utah 84010

Mr. Eric Millis
Page 2

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

(w/copy of enclosed correspondence)

Astor Boozer, Regional Conservationist – West, NRCS, Washington, D.C.
Keisha Tatem, State Conservationist, NRCS, Phoenix, Arizona
Carlos Suarez, State Conservationist, NRCS, Davis, California
Clint Evans, State Conservationist, NRCS, Lakewood, Colorado
Ray Dotson, State Conservationist, NRCS, Reno, Nevada
Xavier Montoya, State Conservationist, NRCS, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Tim Wilson, State Conservationist, NRCS, Salt Lake City, Utah
Astrid Martinez, State Conservationist, NRCS, Casper, Wyoming
Jimmy Bramblett, Deputy Chief for Programs, NRCS, Washington, D.C.
Cole Green, Salinity Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Denver, Colorado
Anders Fillerup, Salinity Engineer, NRCS, Roosevelt, Utah

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

**for the
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM
from the
COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

RECOMMENDATION

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 Federal agencies to work with the Forum on this effort as appropriate.

RESPONSE

NRCS will coordinate with the Forum and other Federal agencies as appropriate on the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

The timing of the renewal of the Charter has been problematic in past years as it has fallen coincident with the Council's fall meeting, making it difficult to commit to meeting and travel arrangements when the Charter had not yet been signed by all three sponsoring agencies. The Council appreciates Reclamation's efforts this past year to move the period for renewal forward. Nevertheless, for the Charter to be effective it needs to be signed by all three sponsoring entities and, therefore, was not filed until August 31, 2018. The Council herein requests that the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, and the Environmental Protection Agency all get on board such that the Charter is renewed in July 2020.

RESPONSE

NRCS will forward the package for review and approval to comply with the July 2020 requested renewal timeframe.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

The Council also recognizes that much of NRCS' past success in implementing salinity control comes from efforts beyond simply servicing EQIP contracts. It comes from talented staff working with producers in properly operating and managing on-farm improvements. A USGS study of NRCS data over a number of years in the Grand Valley shows a wide range in effectiveness derived from implementation and maintenance of the same practices, confirming the importance of the continual need for training and assisting producers. The Council requests that NRCS continue to recognize this need and provide sufficient staff and funding, including sufficient CTA dollars and other non-EQIP dollars, to meet this critical need.

RESPONSE

NRCS will continue to provide staff and funding to promote CTA and other non-EQIP programs in line with local, State and national priorities according to available resources.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council believes that it is the dedication and effective, hard work of NRCS personnel that has made the Program such a success. The Council appreciates the attentiveness of NRCS Washington staff in the Program's success. The Council also recognizes and appreciates the dedicated attention that the three State Conservationists have given the Program, and it invites them to continue to frequently participate in Program meetings, discussions, and activities, as well as provide input, expertise, and guidance as we move the overall Program forward.

RESPONSE

State Conservationists will continue to support the Program by attending and participating in meetings, discussions, and activities as necessary and ensure that NRCS staff continue to provide adequate support to the Program in line with local, State, and national priorities according to available resources.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council very strongly believes that the efforts of NRCS' Salinity Control Program Coordinator have been critical to the Program's successes. Not only has the Coordinator been effective in coordinating and unifying NRCS implementation of the Program but has also been extremely helpful in providing input and expertise in the overall implementation. As one of the major implementing agencies, NRCS' Coordinator has provided a vital role in the Program's successes. The Council sees an absolute need to continue this position and requests that it always be filled with a motivated and well-qualified individual. With the recent retirement of the Coordinator, the Council strongly urges NRCS to quickly act to fill this position with a very qualified individual. The Council believes that this is a most critical and urgent need. Once hired, the Council recommends that the coordinator be given the freedom and resources to focus on control efforts throughout the States and not be burdened with other duties and responsibilities. Further, the Council expresses its strong recommendation that the coordinator represent all State offices involved in salinity control and that he or she be housed in the Reclamation offices in the Federal Building in Salt Lake City so that full Program coordination can continue.

RESPONSE

NRCS management will continue to pursue the opportunity to hire a replacement for the vacant Western Salinity Coordinator position.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council appreciates NRCS' efforts to control salinity in a cost-effective manner. Historically, the Council has urged NRCS to pursue salinity control first in established salinity control areas before going to other parts of the Basin to expend salinity EQIP funds. It was believed that this practice would create opportunities for the most cost-effective contracts.

NRCS has alerted the Council that contracts in some of the approved salinity areas may have increased such that it might not always be as cost effective as other areas within the Basin. Therefore, the Council requests that NRCS provide the Forum, its Work Group, and the Council a comparative review of the cost-effectiveness in the approved project areas over time. Further, it is requested that NRCS, working with the Forum's Work Group, review and study the costs and merits of replacements and upgrades in the salinity areas. This would include a review of the future options associated with systems installed previously by NRCS and which are now reaching or have surpassed their design life.

RESPONSE

NRCS will continue to report cost-effectiveness to the Work Group and Council through the annual updating of the Implementation Status table contained in the annual Federal Accomplishments Report that is provided to the Advisory Council. NRCS will work with the Work Group and Council to study the merits of replacements and upgrades.

RECOMMENDATION

Implementation of the Salinity Control Program has been adaptive over the years as we have needed to adjust to changes in funding, legislation, policies, practices, and producer needs. The Council is aware that changes are under review in the relationship between the technical assistance and division of labor being provided by NRCS and the State ag agency personnel with Basin States Program (BSP) dollars. The Council asks that NRCS continue to stay engaged and provide counsel and guidance in this effort as the most effective and beneficial options for implementation of Program objectives are evaluated and then implemented.

RESPONSE

NRCS will continue to work to improve the efficiency with which it delivers all programs, including Salinity EQIP, to meet agency goals in line with local, State, and national priorities in conjunction with available resources.

RECOMMENDATION

Due to a number of factors, present Program implementation has de-emphasized the role and number of EQIP-ineligible contracts referred to Reclamation for funding consideration. That said, the Council believes that there will continue to be a limited number of such contracts which are cost effective and strategic to overall Program implementation objectives. The Council appreciates NRCS' commitment to improve the process. To the extent that such worthy, yet EQIP-ineligible contracts are received, reviewed, and batched by NRCS, the Council requests that they be forwarded (handed-off) to Reclamation by April 1 of each year and that NRCS provide to Reclamation any evaluations or supporting information it has developed for these contracts so that it can quickly, in conjunction with the State ag agencies, determine which, if any, of the projects will be funded with BSP funds (see also discussion on this matter in the Reclamation section).

RESPONSE

NRCS will attempt to deliver a list of EQIP-ineligible applications, along with supporting information, to Reclamation by April 1 of each year. The timeline is dependent on EQIP funds rollout from NRCS NHQ to help set State-level deadlines.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council recognizes the vital role of 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 are adequately staffed. Recognizing the regional importance of the Salinity Control Program, the Council urges the Secretary to provide sufficient hiring allowances such that the District offices are adequately staffed. The Council is concerned that, while technical service providers may meet a short-term need, long-term adequate staffing is essential to success in meeting Program objectives. The Council requests that the Secretary specifically comment on efforts to provide sufficient staffing to move the Salinity Control Program forward.

RESPONSE

NRCS will continue to utilize all available agency tools to provide sufficient staffing to handle technical assistance needs in the Project areas. NRCS will continue to focus its salinity activities within the 12 project areas, only going to other parts of the Basin if opportunities would be lost and funds might be redirected to other programs outside the Basin.

RECOMMENDATION

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' Salinity Coordinator has been most helpful as this effort has moved ahead in the past. 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.

RESPONSE

NRCS will continue to coordinate with BLM, ARS, and USGS to determine where NRCS programs and technical expertise can facilitate salt control on grazing land.

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 Tables 1 and 2. The Council requests that in their responses, federal agencies specifically comment on funding for these non-construction activities.

RESPONSE

NRCS continues to recognize the importance and value of conservation technical and education assistance, monitoring and evaluation of implemented projects. NRCS will continue to make every effort to meet these demands.

RECOMMENDATION

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: FY2019: \$13,432,500, FY2020: \$12,660,300, FY2021: \$12,920,100 with \$12,920,100 as a preliminary amount for FY2022.

RESPONSE

NRCS leadership will continue to rely on the assessments of the State Conservationists to define and quantify the resource needs in their States when considering funds allocations. The demands for EQIP funding continue to grow and are impacted by the dynamics of the economy, critical natural resource concerns, and responses to extreme weather conditions.



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

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APR 25 2019

Ref: 8WP-CWP

Eric Millis, Vice Chairman
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council
P.O. Box 146201
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6201

Dear Mr. Millis:

Thank you for your letter transmitting the 2018 Annual Report on the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program. Consistent with your recommendation, we will continue to support individual states and tribes, where applicable, as they develop and submit adopted water quality standards for approval.

The EPA appreciates the recognition by the Council for our involvement with Tribes in water quality control efforts in the Colorado River Basin. As mentioned in the Federal Accomplishments Report, the EPA has approved the applications of six tribes within the Colorado River Basin for "treatment in a manner similar to a state" (TAS) pursuant to the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 518 for purposes of the CWA Section 303(c) Water Quality Standards (WQS) and Section 401 Water Quality Certification programs. Four tribes have adopted and the EPA has approved WQS. However, a report on the effectiveness of these WQS efforts, as requested by the Council, is not available. We do not have plans to evaluate the effectiveness of WQS on tribal lands. To gain a better understanding of water quality in tribal waters, the Council could consider inviting tribal water quality staff to future meetings.

Twenty-two tribes, within the Colorado River Basin have TAS authority for the Clean Water Act (CWA) Sec. 319(h) program. Tribes compete nationally for funding from the EPA to implement water quality improvement projects as well as obtain other sources of funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and others. Some of these Tribes have ongoing projects while others have implemented projects in the past that may address salinity in the Colorado River Basin. These project types include riparian enhancement (by eradicating invasive species and planting native vegetation), streambank stabilization, livestock fencing, and irrigation efficiencies.

We clearly understand the importance of the Paradox Valley Unit and the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement process. As a cooperating agency in the process, our Underground Injection Control and National Environmental Policy Act program representatives will continue to support the review efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Finally, staff at EPA Region 8 will continue to represent the EPA in the Colorado River Salinity Control coordination efforts.

Respectfully yours,

Johanna Miller, Director
Clean Water Program

cc: Kib Jacobson
Program Manager, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Don A. Barnett
Executive Director, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum