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## **Colorado River Storage Project Act**

### **Colorado River Water Conservation District Policy Statements:**

**The Colorado River Water Conservation District (Colorado River District) supports the intent of the 1956 Colorado River Storage Project Act (CRSPA) – “The Comprehensive Development of the Water Resources of the Upper Colorado River Basin Act.” (43 U.S.C. 620)**

**To that end, the Colorado River District supports the implementation of plans and policies that optimize the use of the initial units; Aspinall, Flaming Gorge, Glen Canyon dam, and Navajo for the purpose of “making it possible for the states of the upper basin (*sic*) to utilize, consistent with the provisions of the Colorado River compact, the apportionments made to and among them in the Colorado River and Upper Colorado River compacts.” (43 U.S.C. 620)**

**Further, under the act, a number of participating projects were authorized and constructed. These projects, such as the Paonia, Bostwick Park, and Collbran projects, provide critical water supplies to water users within the district.**

**Maintaining and refurbishing these participating projects so that they can continue to provide water for future generations will require a substantial investment by the federal government, as well as state, regional, and local water agencies. To that end, the Colorado River District supports the full use of power revenues generated by the initial units together with congressional appropriations, as needed, to fully maintain these projects and integrated facilities, as well as to construct those projects authorized by CRSPA that are still needed and feasible.**

### **Background & Discussion:**

In 1956, the U.S. Congress passed the Colorado River Storage Project Act (CRSPA). CRSPA authorized the construction of four large storage reservoirs: Powell (‘Glen Canyon’), Flaming Gorge, Navajo, and Aspinall (‘Curecanti’) called the “Storage Projects.” A primary purpose of these reservoirs is to regulate the Colorado River to allow the Upper Basin States to fully develop their compact entitlements while meeting 1922 Compact and Mexico Treaty requirements.

Additionally, CRSPA authorized the following “participating projects” in Colorado: Florida, Paonia, Pine River Extension, Silt, Smith Fork, Bostwick Park, Savery-Pot Hook, and Fruitland Mesa. Finally, the CRSPA directed completion of planning reports on the Juniper, Parshall, Troublesome, Rabbit Ears, Eagle Divide, San Miguel, West Divide, Bluestone, Battlement Mesa, Tomichi Creek, East River, Ohio Creek, Grand Mesa, Dallas Creek, Dolores, Fruit Growers Extension, Animas-LaPlata, and Yellow Jacket projects.

The CRSPA also established the Upper Basin Fund, which was to be funded with a portion of Colorado River derived federal power revenues. Excess revenues, after reimbursement for certain storage project costs, were to be apportioned among the Upper Basin states, with Colorado receiving 46%. These revenues, in turn, were to repay the federal treasury for the construction costs of participating projects.

In 1968, Congress, with the concurrence of the basin states, passed the Colorado River Basin Project Act. Among other things, this Act authorized construction of the Central Arizona Project (CAP) but at a heavy price to Arizona. In order to secure political support, the CAP accepted the first and predominant burden of any Lower Basin shortage allocations. Additionally, one of then-House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee Chairman Wayne Aspinall's conditions for support of the Act was for the Secretary of the Interior to proceed "as nearly as practicable" with the construction of the projects authorized in the 1956 CRSPA, ensuring that construction of these projects would start no later than the date of first delivery of water from the CAP. Clearly, this has not occurred for all CRSPA-authorized projects.

Low levels at Lake Powell raise the prospect of no longer being able to produce hydroelectric power under certain hydrologic conditions. Without stored water being released through the power conduits at such low lake levels, continued compact compliance is no longer assured. Strategically releasing larger quantities of water from Flaming Gorge, Navajo, and the Aspinall unit during prolonged drought conditions can at least delay Lake Powell reaching critical lake levels at which hydropower can no longer be produced.