

# U.S. Department of the Interior

## Office of the Secretary

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## California's Colorado River Water Talks Successful

Negotiations among the largest California water agencies that utilize Colorado river water supplies - the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Imperial Irrigation District, and the Coachella Valley Water District - have been successful. After nearly a year of effort, and working against an August 3 deadline, negotiators for the parties reached consensus late last night on all core elements of a framework agreement. The agreement will resolve long-standing water quantification and use disputes that date back to the 1930s, and which have blocked progress in distributing and utilizing an essential California water supply - the Colorado River.

"Because of this agreement, the goal of bringing California's take of Colorado River water under control is now more clearly in sight," said Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. "I am delighted that David Hayes, working with Governor Davis and his water chief, Thomas Hannigan, were able to facilitate this important milestone. The historians of California water will now be able to say the 20th century ended with a key achievement, one which can facilitate smarter approaches in the next century."

The negotiations were led by David J. Hayes, Acting Deputy Secretary of the Interior and Thomas M. Hannigan, director of California's Department of Water Resources. The framework

agreement will be presented to the water agency boards for approval and implementation within the coming weeks.

"The parties have resolved all major issues and are incorporating their understandings in a framework agreement," Hayes said. "This is the keystone agreement that Southern California needs to help secure its water future."

"The complicated arrangements necessary to accomplish an agreement have their genesis in the 1932 Seven Party Agreement and the 1934 Compromise Agreement," stated Hannigan. "The 1930s-era structure must be modernized if California is to move forward with sound water planning. The framework agreement will make that possible."

(more)

Hannigan added that "reaching agreement on a new quantification approach also is a key step in implementing the 'California 4.4 Plan,' under which the State of California is endeavoring to reduce its use of Colorado River water to match the State's apportionment" of 4.4 million acre-feet per year.

Entering into a consensual quantification agreement advances this interest, by, among other things, (1) establishing a dateline for measuring the amount of water available for transfers, thereby opening the way for the proposed transfer of water from the Imperial Irrigation District to San Diego, and (2) establishing the basis for requesting the Secretary of the Interior to issue surplus guidelines that will assist California through a transition period of reducing the State's over reliance on the Colorado River. In recent years, California has been drawing in excess of 5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water.

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