



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

For immediate release
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COMMISSION SIGNS COLORADO RIVER AGREEMENT IN RESPONSE TO APRIL 2010 EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE IN THE MEXICALI VALLEY

United States Commissioner Edward Drusina and Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, have reached agreement to allow for a temporary delay in delivery of water allotted to Mexico under the 1944 Water Treaty. The delay would affect water that Mexico cannot use until repairs are made to infrastructure damaged during the April 2010 earthquake in the Mexicali Valley. The agreement, Minute 318, "Adjustment of Delivery Schedules for Water Allotted to Mexico for the Years 2010 through 2013 as a Result of Infrastructure Damage in Irrigation District 014, Rio Colorado, Caused by the April 2010 Earthquake in the Mexicali Valley, Baja California," was approved by the Governments of the United States and Mexico on December 20.

In accordance with the 1944 Water Treaty between the two countries, Mexico receives an annual allotment of 1.5 million acre-feet (1,850 million cubic meters) of water from the Colorado River. Minute 318 allows Mexico to adjust its delivery schedule downward during the period from 2010 through 2013 by a total of up to 260,000 acre-feet (320 million cubic meters) when it cannot utilize its full allotment due to damage to its irrigation infrastructure. The water would then be delivered to Mexico in subsequent years after repairs are made to irrigation district canals.

The Minute notes the willingness of authorities in the United States to support Mexico in light of the problems arising from the earthquake damage. Likewise, the Minute states the desire of both countries to schedule future delivery of the water in such a fashion so as not to trigger or exacerbate any potential shortage conditions in the United States.

In Minute 318, the Commission reiterates its commitment to work on additional joint cooperative actions on the Colorado River that could benefit both countries. This work will occur within the framework of Minute 317, which notes the interest of the Commission in exploring opportunities for binational projects that conserve water, minimize the impacts of potential Colorado River shortage conditions, and generate additional volumes of water using new water sources by investing in infrastructure such as desalinization facilities.

“I am pleased that we were able to conclude an agreement that responds to the humanitarian aspect of the significant damage that was experienced in the Mexicali Valley,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina. “Minute 318 sets the stage for future cooperation between the United States and Mexico on the Colorado River that will benefit both countries for years to come.”

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon indicated that this Minute was of special importance to Mexico in that it can reschedule its water deliveries whenever it chooses in order to be able to receive the water when it can be used effectively. This allows Mexico to make the maximum possible use of the waters that are allotted to it under the 1944 Water Treaty, to the benefit of the States of Baja California and Sonora.

The Commission worked closely with Mexico’s National Water Commission and the Bureau of Reclamation in the development of Minute 318. Reclamation is the U.S. federal agency responsible for managing and administering the waters of the Lower Colorado River on behalf of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Approval of Minute 318 coincides with a meeting of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, with Mexico’s Secretary of the Environment, Juan Rafael Elvira, and the Director General of Mexico’s National Water Commission, Jose Luis Luege, during Secretary Salazar’s visit to Mexico.

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