City of Needles, California
Request for City Council Action

☒ CITY COUNCIL ☒ NPUA ☒ Regular ☐ Special

Meeting Date: February 10, 2026
Title: Authorize the Mayor to execute the Bureau of Reclamation's Post-2026 Draft Environmental Impact Statement Public Comment from the City of Needles dated February 10, 2026

Background: Since 1885, the City has had Present Perfected Rights ("PPR") under Contract No. 05-XX-30-W0445, allowing 1,500 acre-feet ("AF") of diversion from the Colorado River ("River"), which provides 950 AF of consumptive use under PPR #43. The Contract is listed in the Consolidated Degree of the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of *Arizona v. California et a*l.

The highest priority rights to River water are "perfected rights" that are based on historical use of river water prior to the construction of the large Federal projects to dam and divert the river water. It is sometimes stated as "First in use, first in right." The use must be for beneficial purposes.

In 1995, the City purchased additional PPR from the Santa Fe Railway Company for 1,260 AF of diversion and 273 AF of consumption, PPR #44. Added together, these PPR allow the City to divert up to 2,760 AF of water (1,500 AF allowed the City via its 1885 PPR diversion and 1,260 AF via the City's acquisition of Santa Fe Railway Company's 1896 PPR diversion) and consume 1,223 AF.

The City of Needles is also allocated 527 acre-feet per year through management of the Lower Colorado Water Supply Project.

The City completed a Phase 1 SCIA pilot project for turf removal at the River's Edge Golf Course on April 15, 2016, which reduces the annual diversion by 232 acre-feet for ten years, expiring in 2026. In total, the City of Needles is allocated 2,261 AF of annual diversions.

Looking ahead, a number of reservoir and water management decisional documents and agreements that govern the operation of Colorado River facilities and the management of Colorado River water are currently scheduled to expire at the end of 2026. The Secretary, acting through Reclamation, proposes the adoption of new guidelines and coordinated management strategies to address Lake Powell and Lake Mead through their full operating range, to be implemented upon the expiration of the existing guidelines and agreements.

The Draft EIS analyzes a broad range of reasonable alternatives for the operational elements identified in the proposed federal action. These alternatives were developed through extensive

engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, as well as the general public, over a timeframe of more than three years.

Despite this extensive engagement, this Draft EIS does **not identify a Preferred Alternative** due to the current absence of a consensus-based approach to post-2026 reservoir operations among Basin entities.

Reclamation anticipates identifying a Preferred Alternative after publication of this Draft EIS that incorporates elements or variations of the Draft EIS alternatives, which would then be fully analyzed in the Final EIS.

Enclosed is the Bureau of Reclamation Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluating a range of operational alternatives for managing Colorado River reservoirs after 2026, when current interim guidelines expire.

The Draft EIS will be published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2026, initiating a 45-day comment period that will end on March 2, 2026. Comments may be submitted via the following methods. Reclamation held two virtual public meetings to provide information on the Draft EIS. Staff and the Board of Public Utilities Chairman participated.

Fiscal Impact: To be determined

Environmental Impact: To be determined

Recommended Action: Authorize the Mayor to execute the Bureau of Reclamation's Post-2026 Draft EIS Public Comment from the City of Needles dated February 10, 2026

Submitted By: Rainie Torrance, Utility Manager

City Manager Approval: Patrick J. Martinez Date: 2/5/2026

Other Department Approval (when required): _____ Date: _____