Lessons from the Colorado River

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Colorado River By the Numbers

The river supports:

- **40 million** people
- **16 million** jobs.
- **5.5 million** acres of farmland
- **11** national parks.
- **29** federally recognized tribes
- **4,200** megawatts of electrical generating capacity.
The Colorado River Basin includes some of the driest states in the country.
The basin also includes some of the fastest-growing states.
The Unwelcome Science, Pre-1922
Compact
19-Year Drought

The river is *overallocated* and its reservoirs have fallen to record low levels.
Historic Legislation

Arizona reached a bipartisan agreement to conserve water in Lake Mead.
Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan

- 7 states, BOR & Mexico; approved by Congress
- New water conservation in Lower Basin
- Start of Demand Management in Upper Basin
- New operating guidelines by 2026
CO Measure DD: Sports betting tax to fund State Water Plan
Groundwater is an important water supply source in the basin.

Percent surface water vs. groundwater use by state

CA Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Requires management of 127 priority basins
- 96% of CA’s annual groundwater pumping
- 88% of CA’s population (overlying the groundwater basins area)
- Local control: Create local agency, develop plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basin Rank</th>
<th>Basin Count</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GW Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1%</td>
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</table>
Our strategy in California
Make SGMA compliance easier and more affordable for landowners and water managers

**PILOT PROJECTS**
- Water trading
- Regional Conservation Investment Strategy
- Multi-benefit Land Conversion

**DATA**
- OpenET Online platform

**GUIDANCE**
- Protecting Groundwater Quality in California
- Groundwater Pumping Allocations under California’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
- Addressing Regional Surface Water Depositions in California

**COMMUNITIES**
- Leadership Institute Groundwater Game
Arizona: Rural Groundwater & Water Transfers

OPINION

Water shortages are a real threat for rural Arizona. Can we stop them?

Bruce Babbitt and Kathleen Ferris, opinion contributors  Published 6:00 a.m. MT June 21, 2019

‘They’re going to dry up’: Debate erupts over plan to move water from farmland to suburbs

Ian James, Arizona Republic  Published 7:30 a.m. MT Nov. 20, 2019
Does Arizona need a new economic playbook?
Accurate Data: OpenET
Filling the biggest data gap in water management

Reliable ET data are produced and available at low cost, and easily accessible via etdata.org for any area within the western US.
Collaborative Water Management Solutions

Balanced/multi-benefit
Flexible (capacity to adjust over time)
Data-guided
Community supported
Thank you

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