

Colorado Conservation: Saving Water to Help Marine Mammals

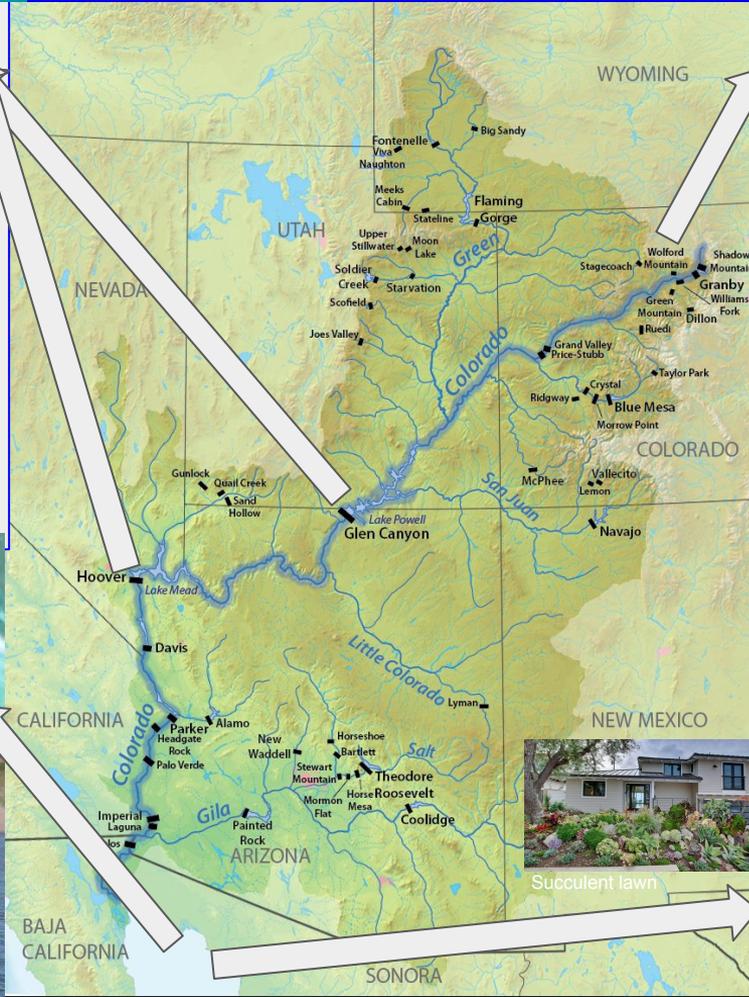
Problems:

Increased damming and diversion infrastructure has rerouted water that usually flows to the Gulf towards agriculture and humans

- The lack of water reaching the Gulf of California is changing the surrounding ecosystems and therefore affecting all organisms found there.
- There are many endangered animals that are important to the ecosystem of the Gulf. It is home to 40% of cetaceans at some point in the year, multiple sea lion colonies and other important and endemic marine life
- Large fishing and shrimping industries in the gulf that are affected by the flow of the Colorado river
- Eight million people, including many indigenous tribes, live and depend on the gulf for resources and income
- Use of valuable river water is debated politically. Making changes is difficult considering the current political climate in the US. Also, since the river flows through two countries, the US and México need to communicate civilly and effectively to find compromises



Vaquitas (top right), Totoabas (above), both endangered species, and Gray Whales (right) are all affected by the decreased river flow.



Background: The Colorado River is approximately 1450 miles long, beginning in La Poudre Pass Lake and ending in the Gulf of California. In the last 150 years, estimates suggest that the water from the river has become so sectioned off between dams and the diversion infrastructures that provide water for agriculture and millions of people that the river no longer reaches its full length.



Solutions:

- Use less water. Colorado alone used over 57% of the allotted water to the upper river basin in 1990
- Redirect water not used in the shower/sink to the toilet or water that isn't used for cleaning
- Turn off water while applying shampoo and soap in the shower
- Get shower heads that release less water than average ones
- Use Smart sprinklers that can detect water needed and stop when there is enough to keep the grass alive
- Have a sprinkler system that collects excess water and recycles it
- Guide to watering Colorado Lawns
- Replace (some) grass that needs a lot of water with succulents and plants that don't need as much water
- Support agriculture that requires less water to be produced (~80% of the river diversions go to agriculture) such as eating less meat
- Encourage the government to release water - - Find a system to recycle clean water and return it to the natural flow of the River



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