




# Our Water, Our Future on the West Slope

*Marielle Cowdin, Director of PR  
Colorado River District*





The Colorado River District was formed in 1937 to protect West Slope water users AND to safeguard for Colorado all waters of the Colorado River to which the state is entitled.





# Roadmap

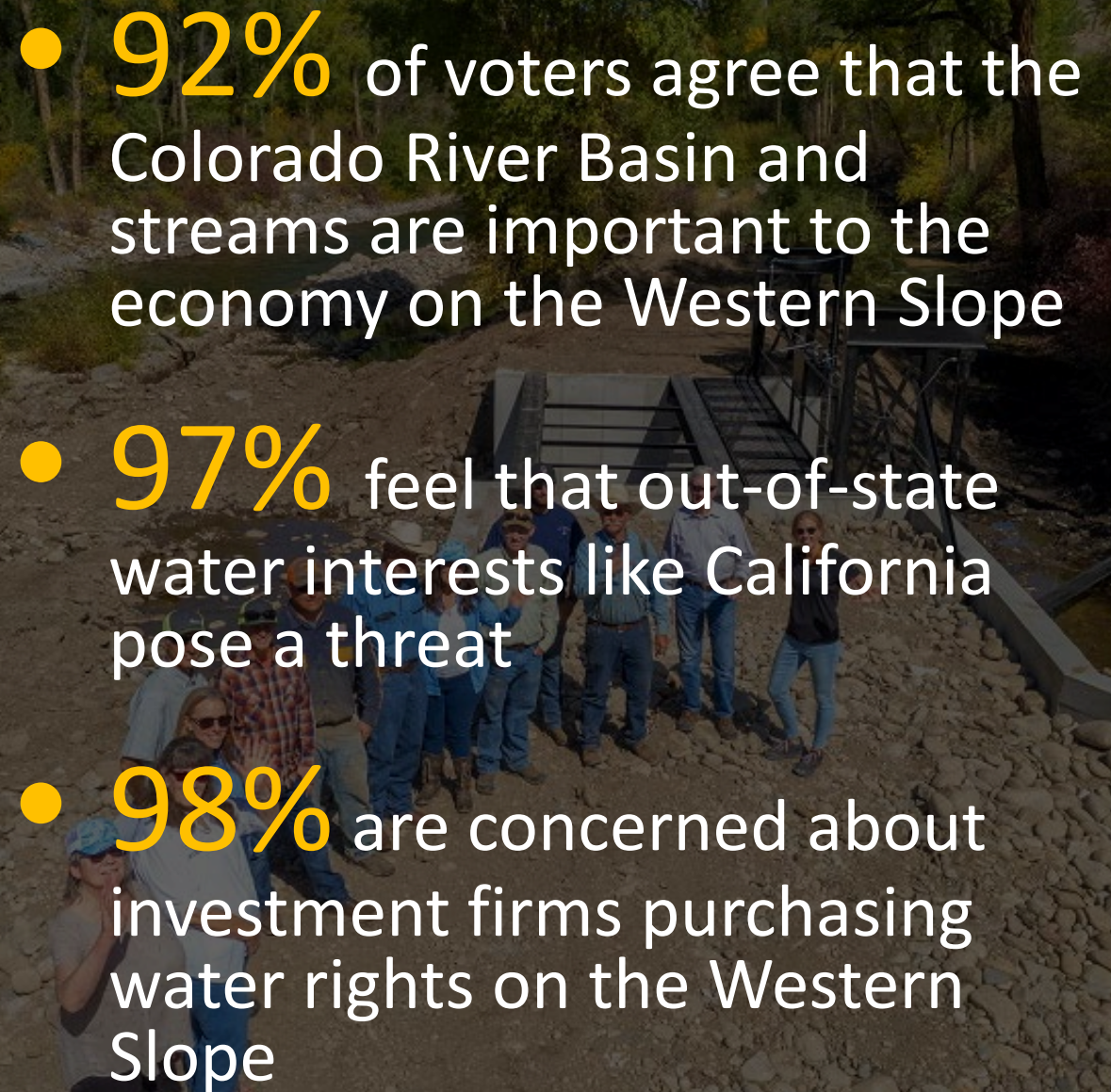
- I. The Colorado River Crisis – Yes, we all know there's still a crisis
- II. Solutions & Unintended Consequences
- III. Protect Western Colorado





# West Slope Residents Paying Attention



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- **92%** of voters agree that the Colorado River Basin and streams are important to the economy on the Western Slope
  - **97%** feel that out-of-state water interests like California pose a threat
  - **98%** are concerned about investment firms purchasing water rights on the Western Slope

# A System in Crisis and the Headlines to Prove it

**More bad news for the Colorado River** **MONTROSE** DAILY **PRESS**

**The Search for Solutions to Colorado's Water Crisis** **5280**

**Get Wall Street out of our water** **THE DAILY**  
**SENTINEL**  
GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

**Conferees told Colorado River action 'absolutely critical'** **AP** **AP NEWS**



# The Colorado River Basin





# West Slope Residents Paying Attention



# 97%

of West Slope water users feel that out-of-state water interests like California pose a threat.

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# Reclamation official tells Colorado River states to conserve up to 4 million acre-feet of water

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June 15, 2022

*Marianne Goodland, Colorado Politics.  
Updated Aug. 17, 2022*

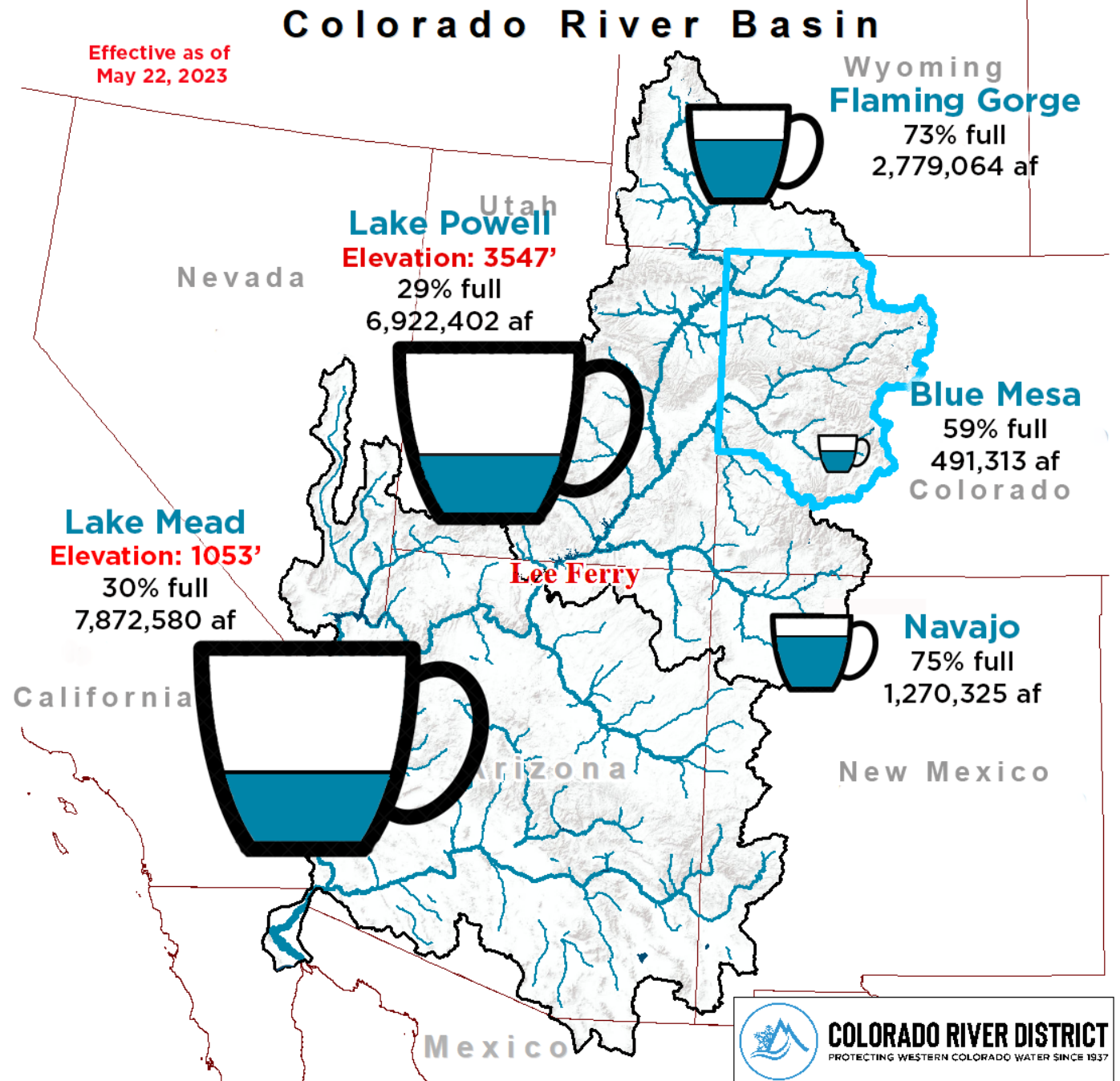
Promises to use 'unilateral power' to bring the river back into balance if states cannot come to an agreement.



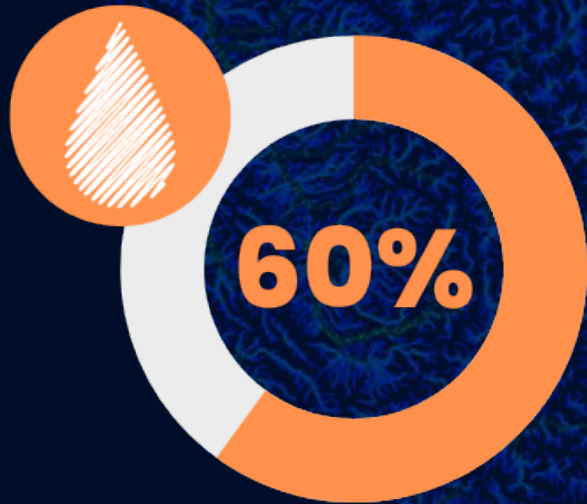
...ville C. Tautou



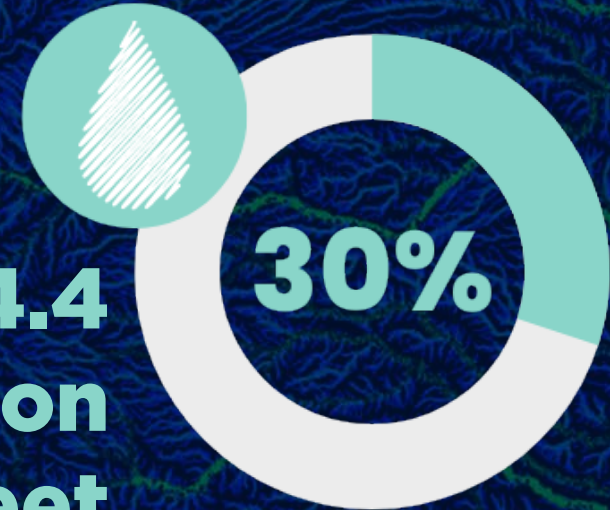
# System Storage as of May 22, 2023



# 2011-2022 Average Use



8.8  
Million  
Acre Feet



4.4  
Million  
Acre Feet

+ 1.5 Million Acre Feet to Mexico



14.7 Million  
Acre Feet Total

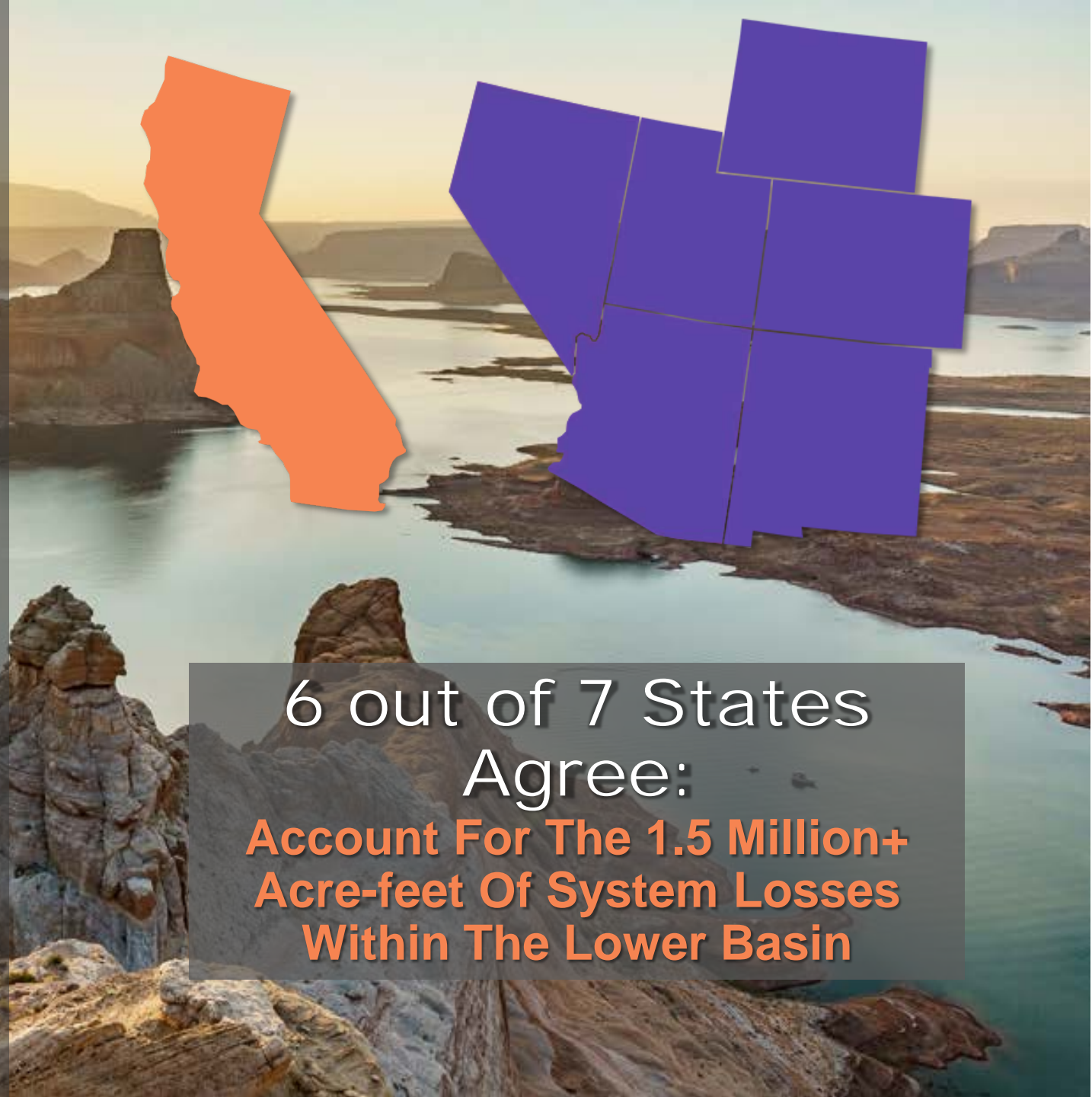
**And  
Transit  
Losses**





# The 6-State Solution: Consensus-Based Modeling

- Submitted to the Department of Interior on January 31, 2023
- Adjustments to Lower Basin contributions required under Drought Contingency Plan
- Account for hydrologic shortages in the Upper Division States



**6 out of 7 States Agree:  
Account For The 1.5 Million+  
Acre-feet Of System Losses  
Within The Lower Basin**



# The Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)

- Draft shared by the Bureau of Reclamation on April 11, 2023
- 45-day NEPA public comment period
- The River District is working directly with Commissioner Mitchell to look at the ramifications of the proposed actions



# PAUSE

## Purpose

Primarily addresses BOR's water management in the Lower Basin, where they are water masters

Allows the Bureau greater flexibility when trying to balance the system between 2024 and 2026

- Prevent further crisis while stakeholders develop a long-term consensus solution to implement in 2026

# System Conservation (Pilot) Program vs. Demand Management



Water NOT  
measured or  
shepherded

Water sent  
downstream to  
protect critical  
infrastructure

BOTH

Voluntary, Temporary,  
Compensated

NOT a Free Market  
Program

Potential long-term  
consequences for local  
ag

Address system  
shortages.



DEMAND  
MANAGEMENT

Water amounts  
measured and  
shepherded into Upper  
Basin reservoirs

To be used only for  
Compact compliance





# Colorado River Drought Task Force

## Voting Members Representing:

- Agricultural Producers
- State and Local Governments
- Water Providers
- Environmental Orgs.
- Conservation Districts



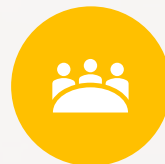
# River District Will Continue to...



Provide up-to-date  
science, data, modeling



Build and maintain  
relationships with  
policy makers



Drive conversations in  
Interstate & Federal  
discussions



Call for Lower Basin  
evaporation and transit  
loss accounting





# West Slope Residents Paying Attention



**94%**

of voters think the loss of farmlands, ranches and orchards and the availability of water for agriculture are serious issues.

**98%**

are concerned about investment firms purchasing water rights on the Western Slope.



# COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT

COMMUNITY FUNDING PARTNERSHIP



High-Impact Projects  
And Investments For  
West Slope Water

**\$4.2 MILLION ANNUALLY**





Community Funding  
Partnership

Over \$7 million

80+ projects

Leveraging over  
\$63 million  
For West Slope Water

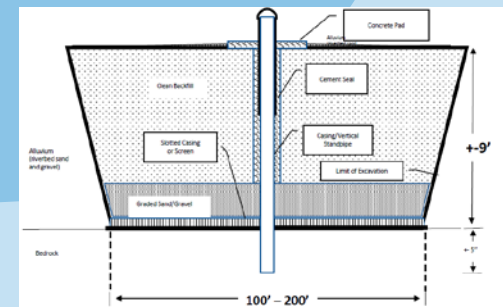


# Hot Sulphur Springs

- Accelerator Grant: \$48,540
- Technical support for emergency water treatment
- Develop infiltration gallery
- Redundant municipal water source that is not susceptible to impacts of East Troublesome Fire



*Hot Sulphur*  
Town of  
*Springs*



Town of Hot Sulphur Springs Infiltration Gallery Design Concept Cross-Section, Preliminary, Not for Construction

# Kawuneeche Valley Ecosystem Restoration Collaborative

- Accelerator Grant: \$48,500
- Collaborative to implement restoration projects on North Fork Colorado Watershed
- Design and assessment for identified project



# Protect Western Colorado



## SIGN UP

- Sign up for our News Drop, follow us on social media

## JOIN IN

- Join in local water conservation discussions

## TALK TO US

- We're listening
- Community Funding Partnership
- Other project funding opportunities



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**Colorado River District**



**@ColoradoWater**



**ColoradoRiverDistrict**