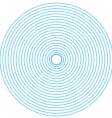


COLORADO RIVER



Allocation of main stem water to each state based on "Law of the River" agreements.



Average annual water usage from the main stem. Red is used for states that exceed the allowance, and yellow for states that are within the allowance.



Reported municipal and industrial water use.

Reported agricultural water use.

How does a river disappear? Where does it go? In the case of the Colorado, every drop of water is spoken for from the moment the river cascades down La Poudre Pass in Colorado's Rocky Mountains. The river irrigates 3.5 million acres of crops and supports 30 million people who drink, swim, boat, and divert the water to generate electricity throughout the parched southwestern United States and northern Mexico.

A complex set of agreements known collectively as the "Law of the River" dictates precisely how much water each of seven states can take from the main stem of the Colorado and from tributaries upstream of Lees Ferry, Arizona. But a loophole in the law allows some states to draw additional, unregulated water from tributaries below Lees Ferry. Arizona, for example, siphons water from the Salt and Gila Rivers, which are below Lees Ferry and therefore not regulated by the Law of the River.

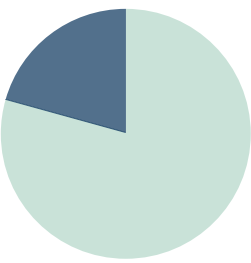
The graphics below show how the Colorado River is used and overused by the seven states it serves. (A "million acre-foot," or maf, is the amount of water it would take to cover 1 million acres to a depth of 1 foot. One acre-foot is equal to 325,851 gallons.)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

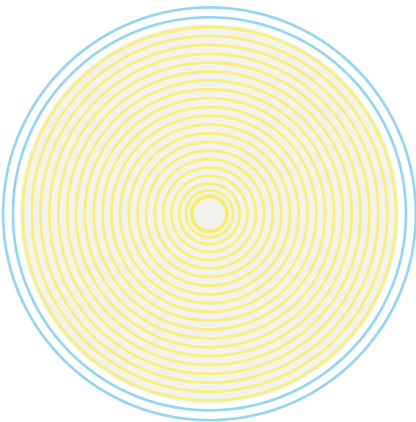
4 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

0.907 MAF Municipal and Industry

3 MAF Agriculture



4.4 MAF Allowance

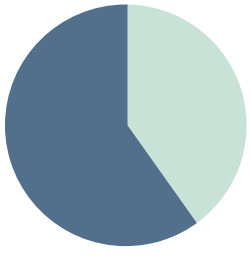


ARIZONA

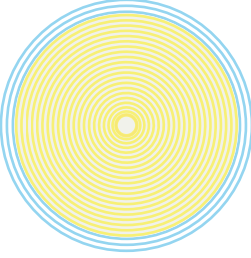
2.681 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

1.606 MAF Municipal and Industry

1.075 MAF Agriculture



2.8 MAF Allowance



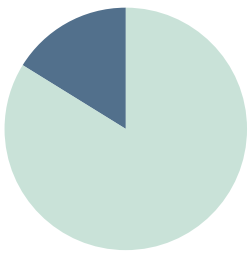
2.606 MAF Additional Unregulated Water

COLORADO

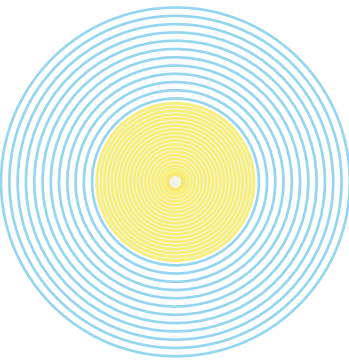
1.852 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

0.301 MAF Municipal and Industry

1.551 MAF Agriculture



3.88 MAF Allowance

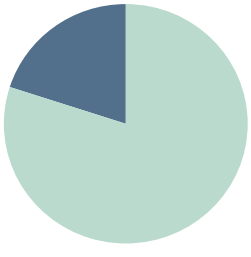


UTAH

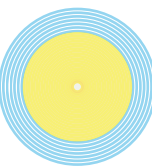
1.201 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

0.242 MAF Municipal and Industry

0.959 MAF Agriculture



1.72 MAF Allowance



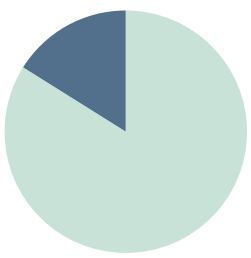
0.435 MAF Additional Unregulated Water

NEW MEXICO

0.417 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

0.174 MAF Municipal and Industry

0.244 MAF Agriculture



0.84 MAF Allowance



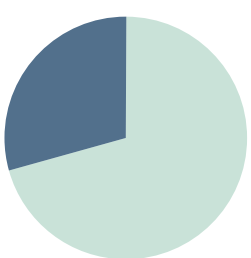
0.24 MAF Additional Unregulated Water

NEVADA

0.385 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

0.31 MAF Municipal and Industry

0.75 MAF Agriculture



0.3 MAF Allowance



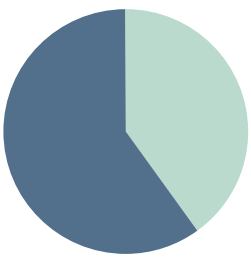
0.102 MAF Additional Unregulated Water

WYOMING

0.374 MAF Reported Annual Water Use

0.63 MAF Municipal and Industry

0.31 MAF Agriculture



1.05 MAF Allowance



SOURCE: United States Bureau of Reclamation
* Southern California's water allocation goes to the following counties only: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura.
A collaboration between GOOD and Grist.org. Special thanks to *National Geographic* magazine and *Running Dry* author Jonathan Waterman.