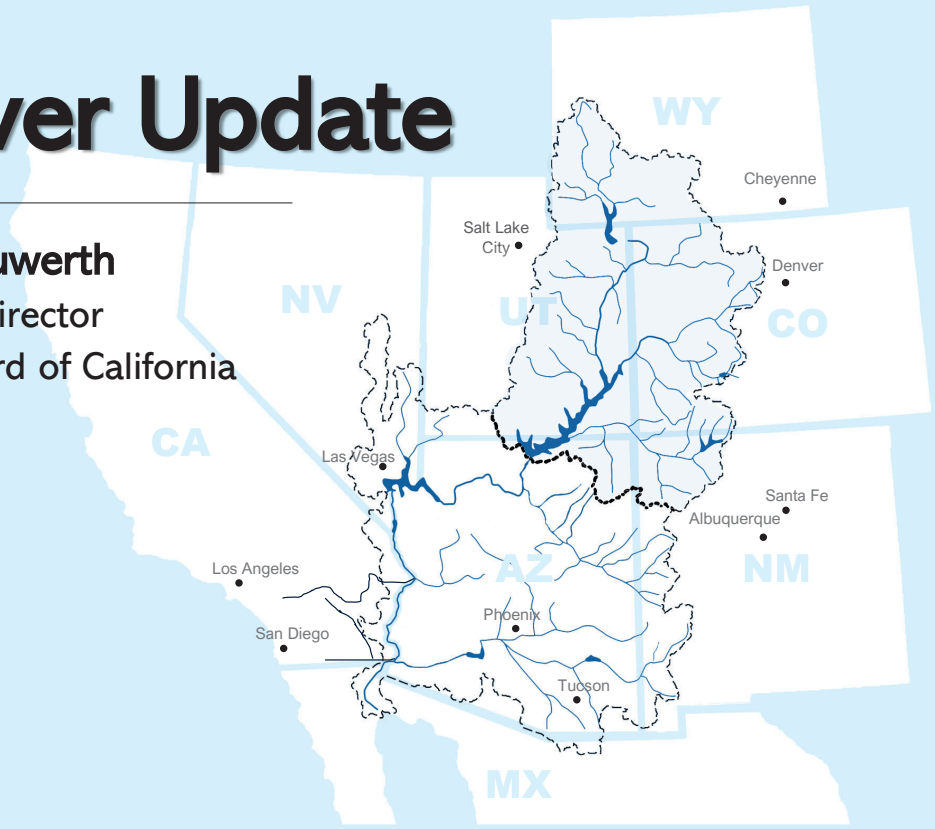
Colorado River Update

Jessica Neuwerth
Executive Director
Colorado River Board of California



Colorado River Board of California

- Established in 1937
- State agency charged with protecting California's rights and interests in the resources of the Colorado River
- Members include six major Colorado River water and power users in California, state agencies, and two public members:

Coachella Valley Water District
IID — A century of service
LA DWP Los Angeles Department of Water & Power
California Department of Fish & Wildlife
Department of Water Resources, State of California
The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Palo Verde Irrigation District, Blythe, California
San Diego County Water Authority

Colorado River Basics

- 1922 Compact allocates 17.5 MAF/yr
- 2000-2024 natural flow: 12.4 MAF/yr
- Total system storage up to ~60 MAF
- Currently operating under 2007 Interim Guidelines, which:
  - Coordinate releases between Lake Powell and Lake Mead
  - Set shortages in the Lower Basin
- 2007 Guidelines expire in 2026
- Basin States currently negotiating successor guidelines



Post 2026 Guidelines

- Basin States submitted dueling proposals in 2024
- Lower Basin has proposed reductions of 1.5 MAF/yr in Lower Basin and Mexico under most reservoir conditions:
  - AZ: 760 KAF/yr
  - CA: 440 KAF/yr
  - NV: 50 KAF/yr
  - MX: 250 KAF/yr
- Negotiations are focused on additional reductions, which will likely be needed under dry conditions
- Draft EIS expected by Dec/Jan
- Final EIS needed by October 2026



Barriers to a Basin States Deal

- Role of the Upper Basin
  - Lower Basin believes Upper Basin must release a steady supply of water downstream, but have offered to shared impacts of drought
  - Upper Basin believes they should be allowed to develop additional water use and aren't required to reduce uses
- Logistical challenges: more diffuse management and accounting in Upper Basin, less federal control
- Compressed timeframe to reach agreement

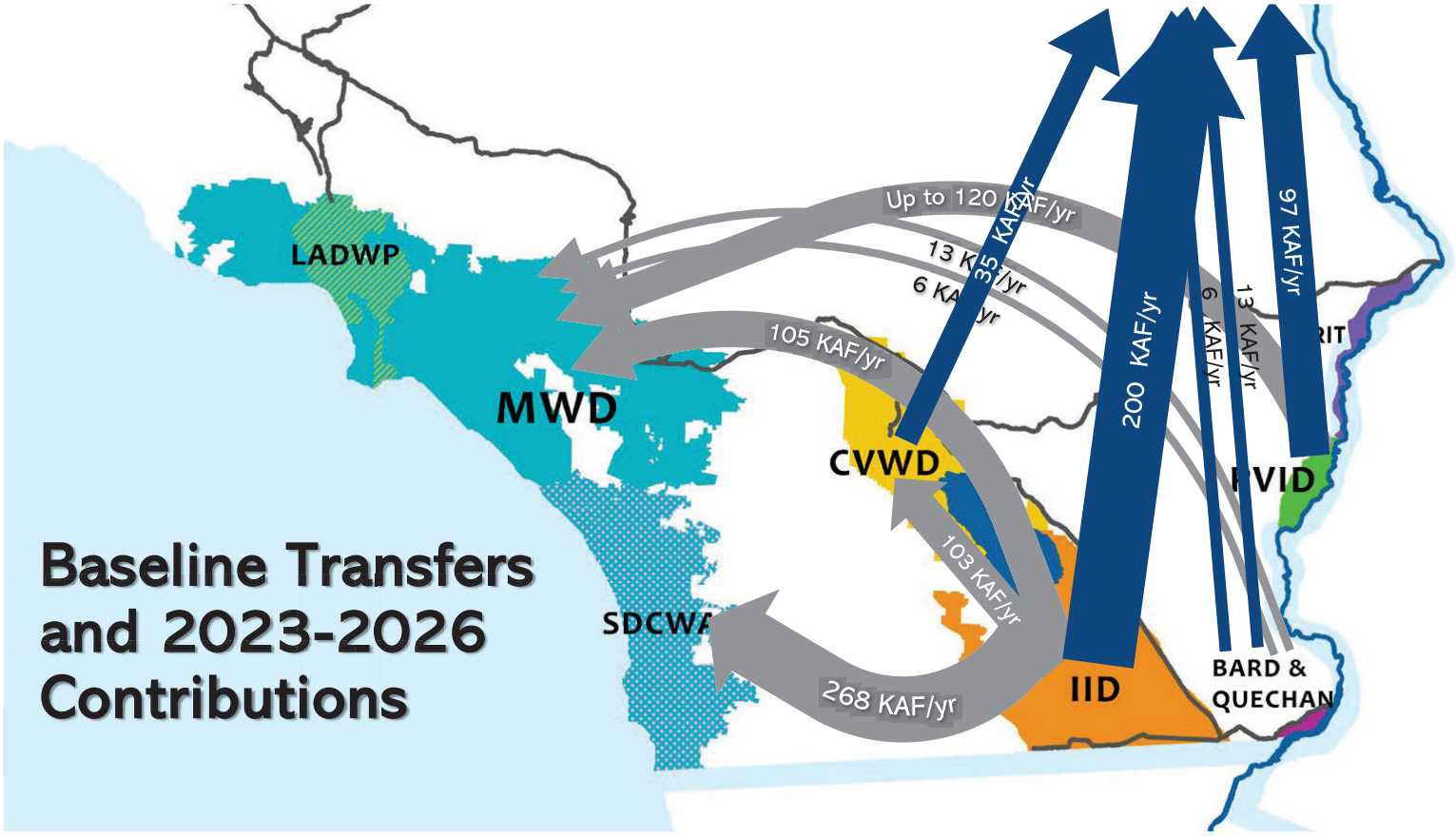


What's Happening in California?

- California is currently conserving approx. 400 KAF annually from 2023-2026
- Committed to conserve 440 KAF in most years post-2026
- Ongoing discussions within California on sharing post-2026 reductions
- Additional reductions may be needed in response to poor hydrology



Baseline Transfers and 2023-2026 Contributions

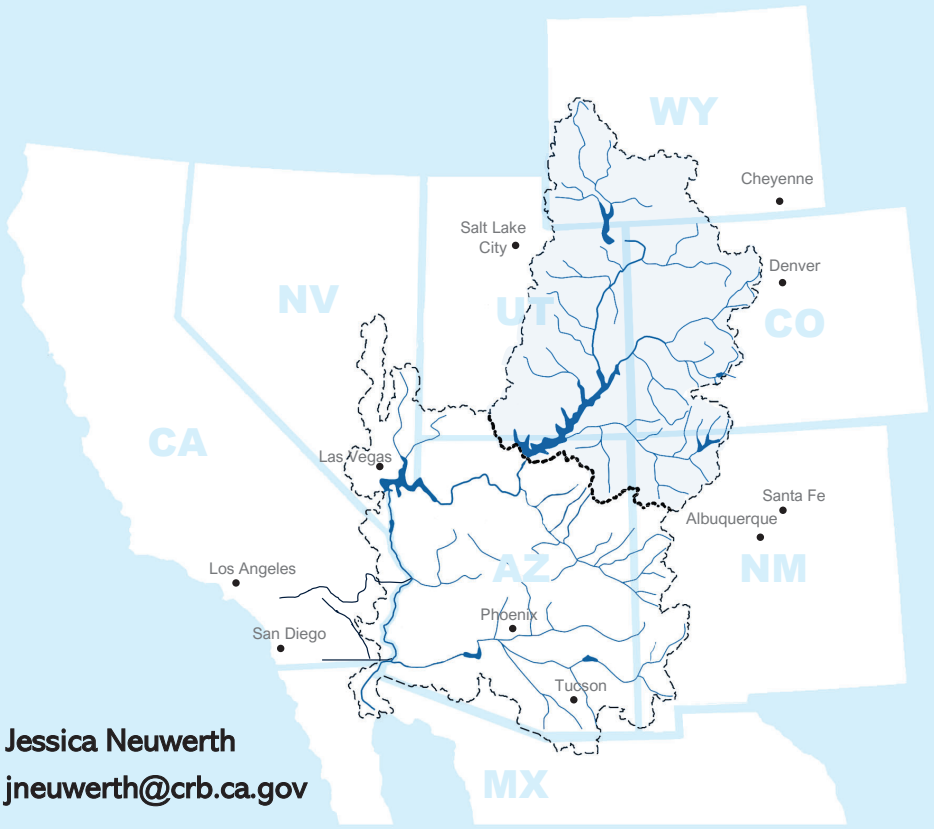


What Next?

- Basin states working to agree to key terms by November 11, 2025
- New rules must be in place by October 1, 2026
- If Basin States are unable to reach agreement, Reclamation will likely move forward with a federal proposal
- Potential for conflict between states/water users and Reclamation or among the Basin States



Thank you!



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