

Moving Waters



the Colorado River & the West

Use At Will

Contact: Nancy Dallett, Project Coordinator
Arizona Humanities Council
602.257.0335 ext. 23

MOVING WATERS: THE COLORADO RIVER & WEST KEY FACTS

FACT: The Nile is the longest river in the world. The Amazon is the largest. The Colorado River is one of the hardest working.

FACT: The Colorado River, with its massive draining system, provides the lifeblood for the American West. It is one of only 3 major rivers in the West that drain to the sea.

FACT: The Colorado River watershed drains 248,000 square miles, 4,000 in Mexico.

FACT: The major tributaries include the Yampa, White, Green, Gunnison, San Juan, Little Colorado, Salt and Gila Rivers. The Colorado river flows 1,700 miles from Wyoming's melting glaciers and Colorado's snow run-off, and falls 14,000 feet before reaching the Gulf of California.

FACT: The river carves out the Marble, Grand, Black, Boulder, Topok and Grand Canyons.

FACT: Twenty-five million people in seven western states (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming) and two Mexican states (Sonora and Baja, California) and 32 American Indian tribal communities share the Colorado River water.

FACT: There are no major population centers along the Colorado River. Technology has made it possible to move the water to distant desert cities.

FACT:The 1922 Colorado River Compact divided the river into the Upper and Lower Basins. The Upper Basin includes Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming; the Lower Basin includes Arizona, California and Nevada.

FACT:The Upper Basin states are allocated 7.5 million acre-feet of water; the Lower Basin states are allocated 7.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water. Mexico is allocated 1.5 million acre-feet. That totals 16.5 million acre-feet. The river only flows at an average rate of 15 million acre-feet. The river is over-allocated.

FACT:Six national parks and numerous recreation areas along the Colorado shores support boating, hiking, fishing and white water rafting.

FACT:Over the last 100 years, 20 dams and 80 diversions on the river collectively reduced the river flow to the delta by 75%. In the 1920s the Colorado River Delta was described as “milk and honey wilderness.” Today it is a salt flat in many places.

###