

The Colorado River basin, how to deal with water issues?

Task:

You are journalists and you've just received images from the Colorado River basin. Build the report using information in the joined documents.

Document 1:



Document 2 :

The farmers here use groundwater¹ which is free. The amount of water used is equivalent to a 1500 mm annual rainfall. The actual rainfall in this area is 77 mm per year.



Source: United States Geological Survey (USGS), 2012.

Las Vegas Strip

1 000 liters of water per customer are consumed everyday in Vegas. The water comes from the Glen Canyon (see map on source 1) and the Hoover dam on the Colorado river.



Source: Photo on the right © Mrs Ferlut, 2006 and photo on the left telegraph.co.uk, 2012

Document 3 : Colorado basin, before and today.

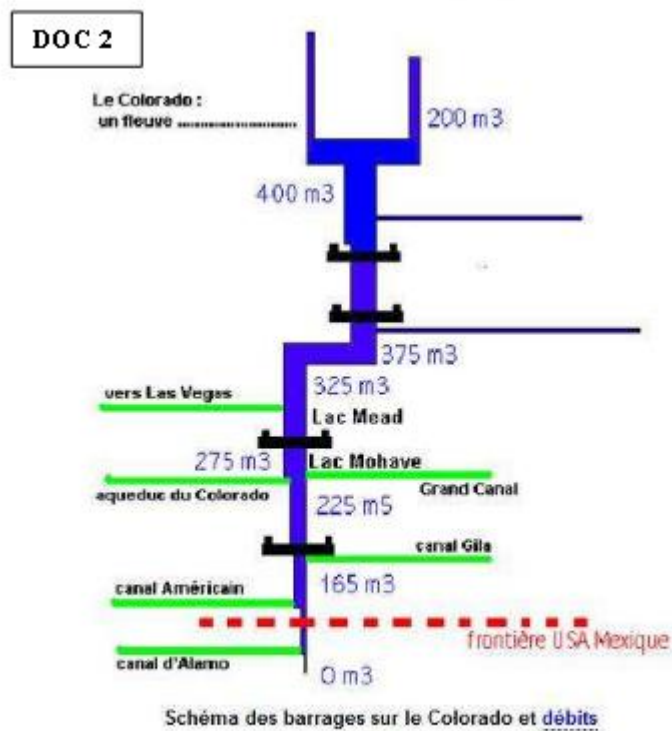


Santa Cruz River, Tucson, Arizona
1919 and 2011...

Source : National Geographic.



Document 4 :



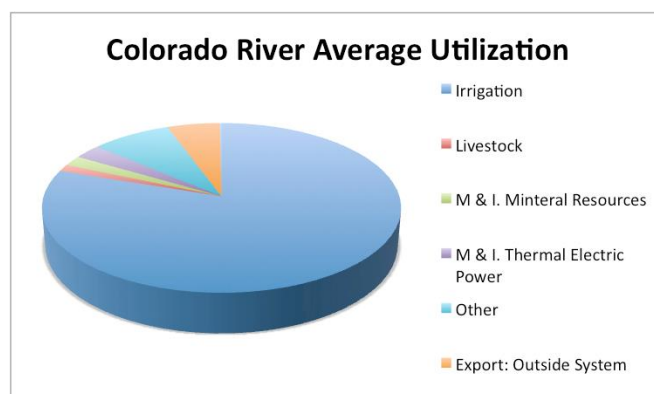
http://www.futura-sciences.com/fr/doc/t/developpement-durable/d/geopol-et-guerre-de-leau_622/c3/221/p7/

Document 5 : source : sciences po cartographie.

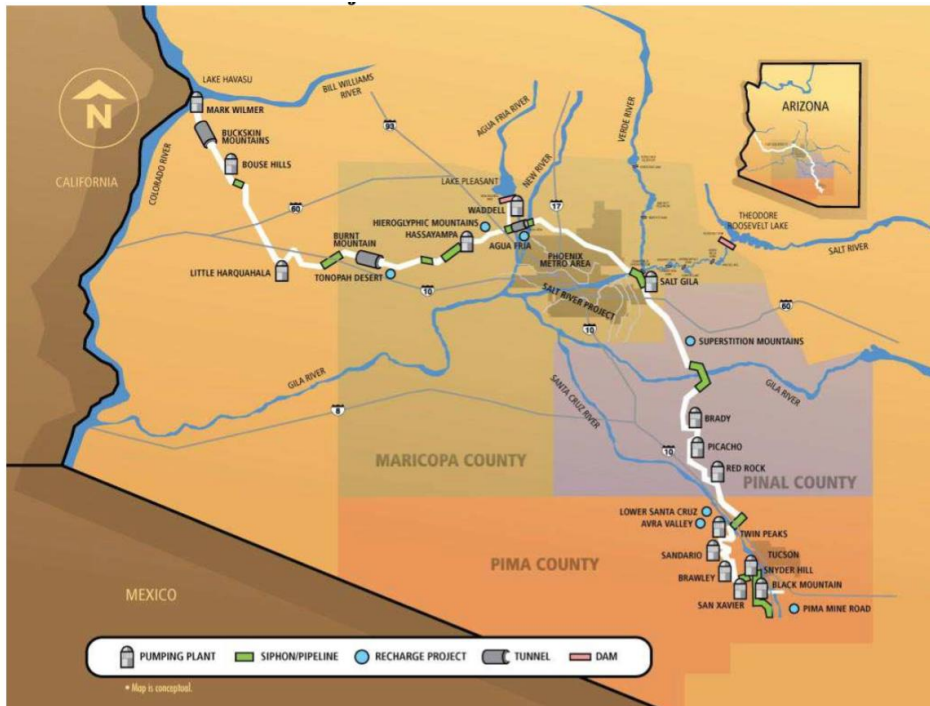
Sharing Colorado's water



Document 6 :

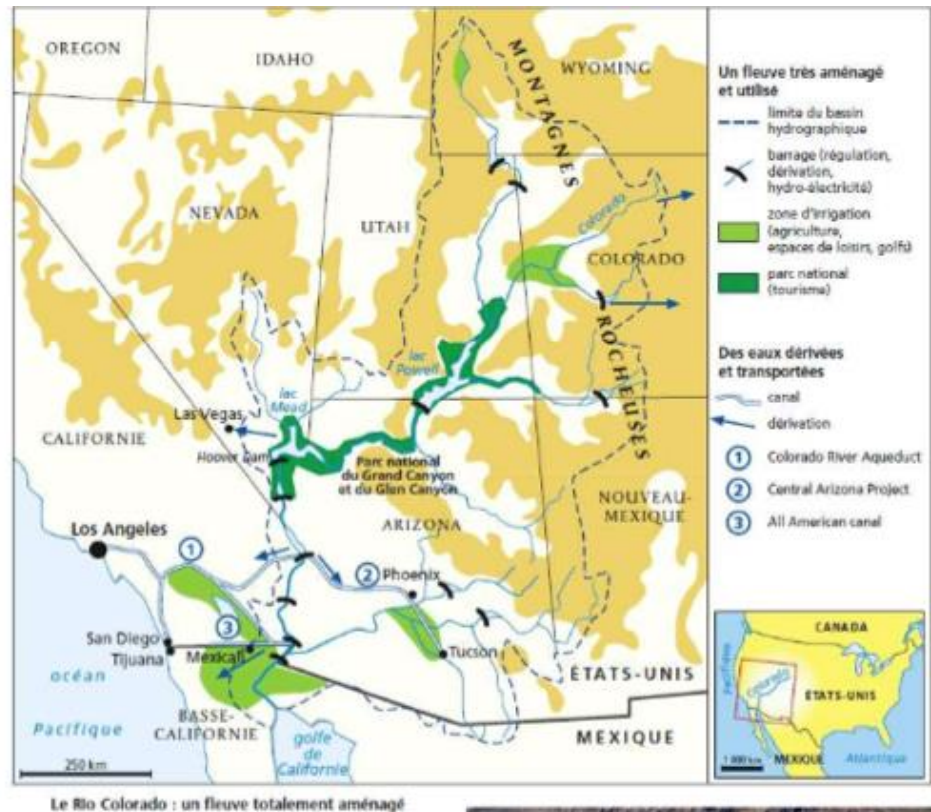


Document 7 : The central Arizona Project.



Source: Colorado Storage Project, United States Bureau of Reclamation, 2012.

Document 8 :



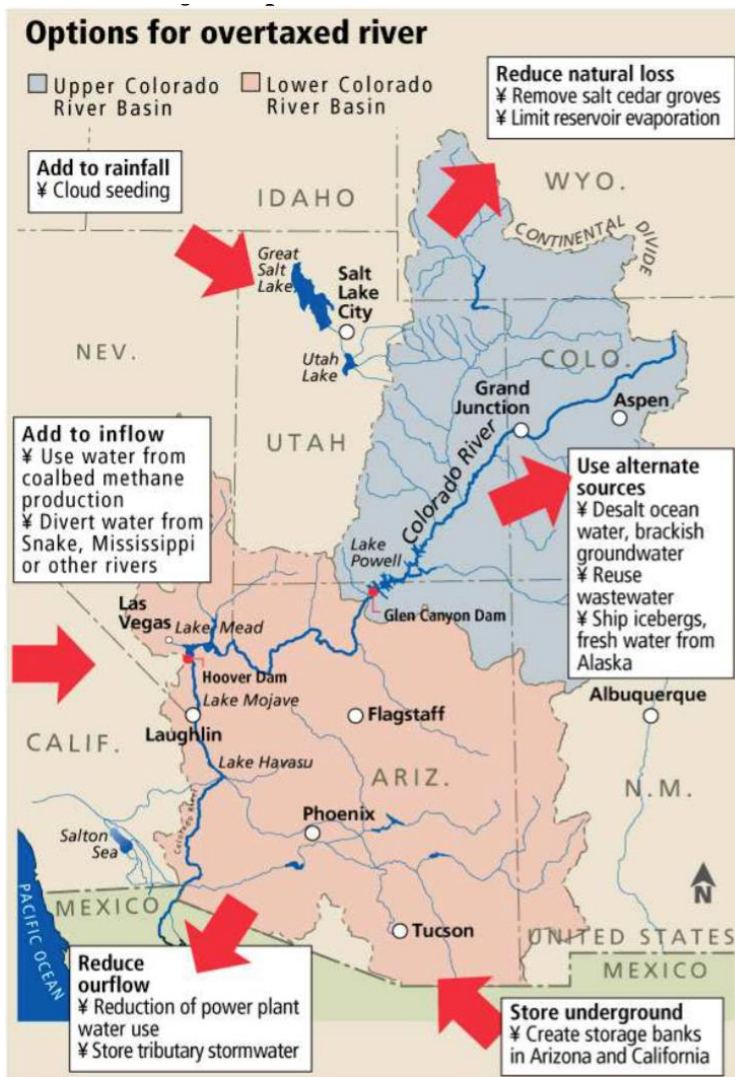
Document 9 :

From its source high in the Rocky Mountains, the Colorado River channels water south nearly 1,500 miles, over falls, through deserts and canyons, to the lush wetlands of a vast delta in Mexico and into the Gulf of California. That is, it did so for six million years. Then, beginning in the 1920s, Western states began divvying up the Colorado's water, building dams and diverting the flow hundreds of miles, to Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix and other fast-growing cities. [...] The damming and diverting of the Colorado, the nation's seventh-longest river, may be seen by some as a triumph of engineering and by others as a crime against nature [...]. The river has been running especially low for the past decade, as drought has gripped the Southwest. It still tumbles through the Grand Canyon, much to the delight of rafters and other visitors. And boaters still roar across Nevada and Arizona's Lake Mead, 110 miles long and formed by the Hoover Dam. But at the lake's edge they can see lines in the rock walls, distinct as bathtub rings, showing the water level far lower than it once was – some 130 feet lower⁴, as it happens, since 2000. Water resource officials say some of the reservoirs fed by the river will never be full again. [...] The city [of Las Vegas] is one of the largest in the Colorado River basin, but its share of the river is relatively small; when officials allocated the Colorado's water to different states in 1922, no one expected so many people to be living in the Nevada desert. So Nevadans have gotten used to coping with limitations. They can't water their yards or wash their cars whenever they like; communities follow strict watering schedules. [...] In 1922, [...] the delta of the Colorado river stretched over nearly 3,000 square miles ; today, it covers fewer than 250.

The river has become a perfect symbol of what happens when we ask too much of a limited resource: it disappears. In fact, the Colorado no longer regularly reaches the sea.

Source: Dams, irrigation and now climate change have drastically reduced the once-mighty river. Is it a sign of things to come?, by Sarah Zielinski , Smithsonian magazine, October 2012.

Document 10 :



MIKE JOHNSON/REVIEW-JOURNAL

Source: Review Journal, CRSP (Colorado River Storage Project), 2012.