

Getting Ahead of a Water Crisis

Binational Collaboration for Water Supply Reliability
in the Colorado River Basin

Segundo Coloquio Internacional de Cuencas Sustentables

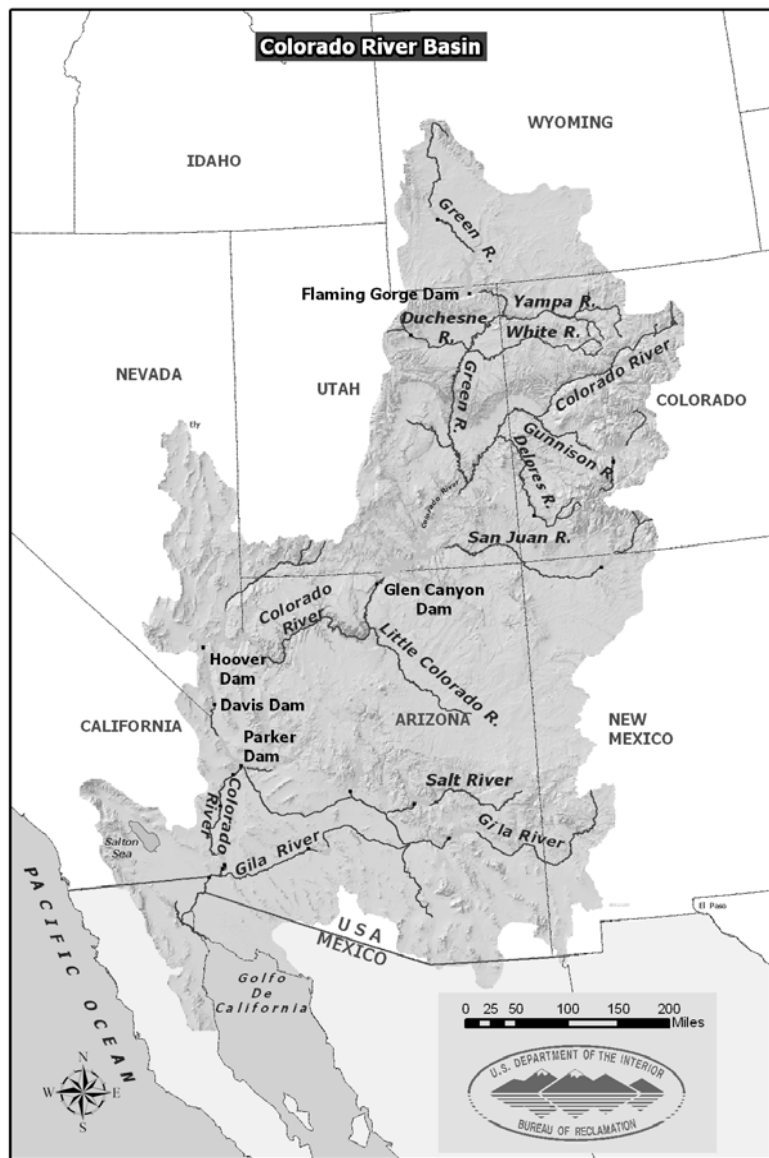
Mexico City

29 September, 2010



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND

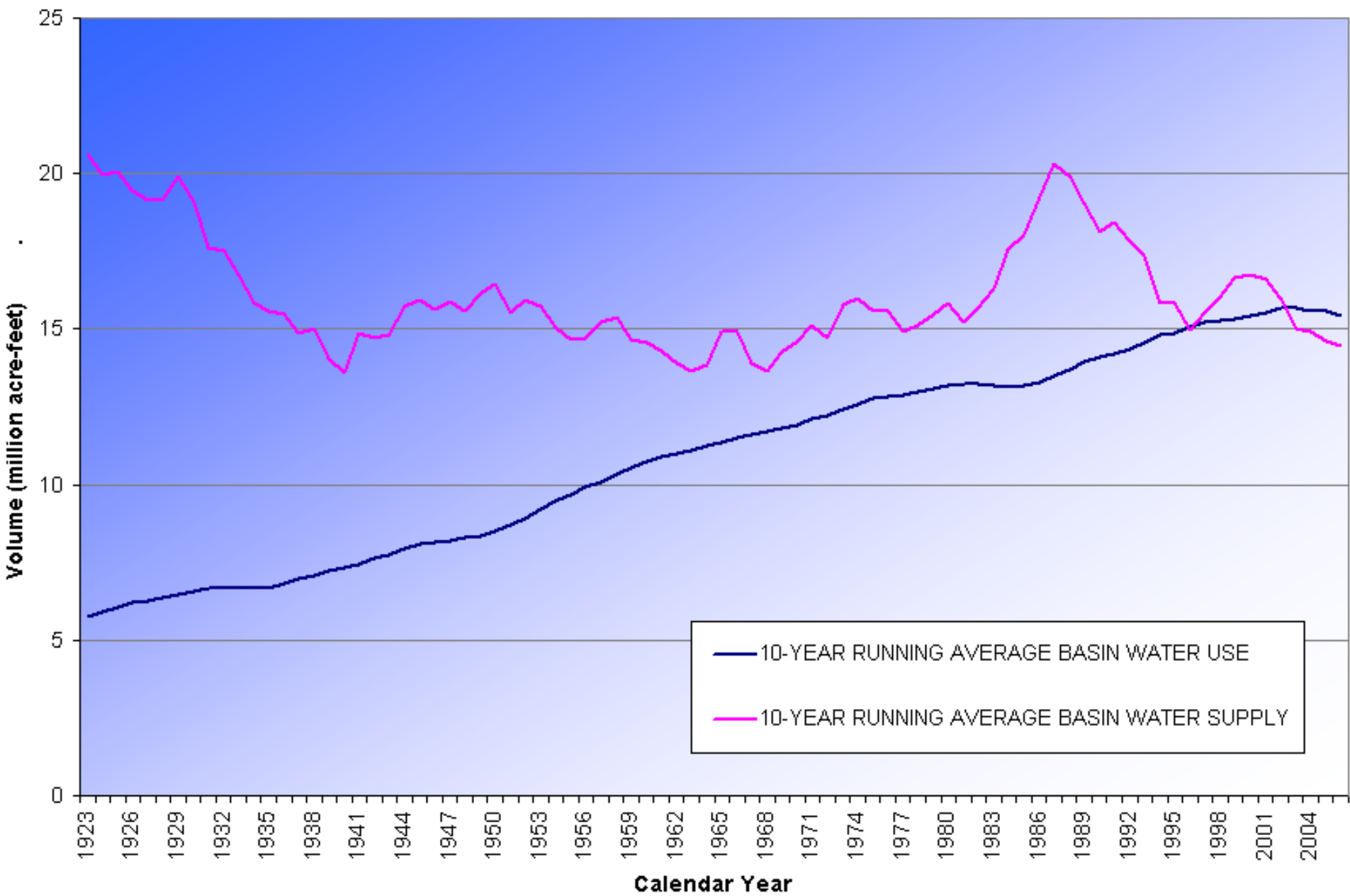
finding the ways that work

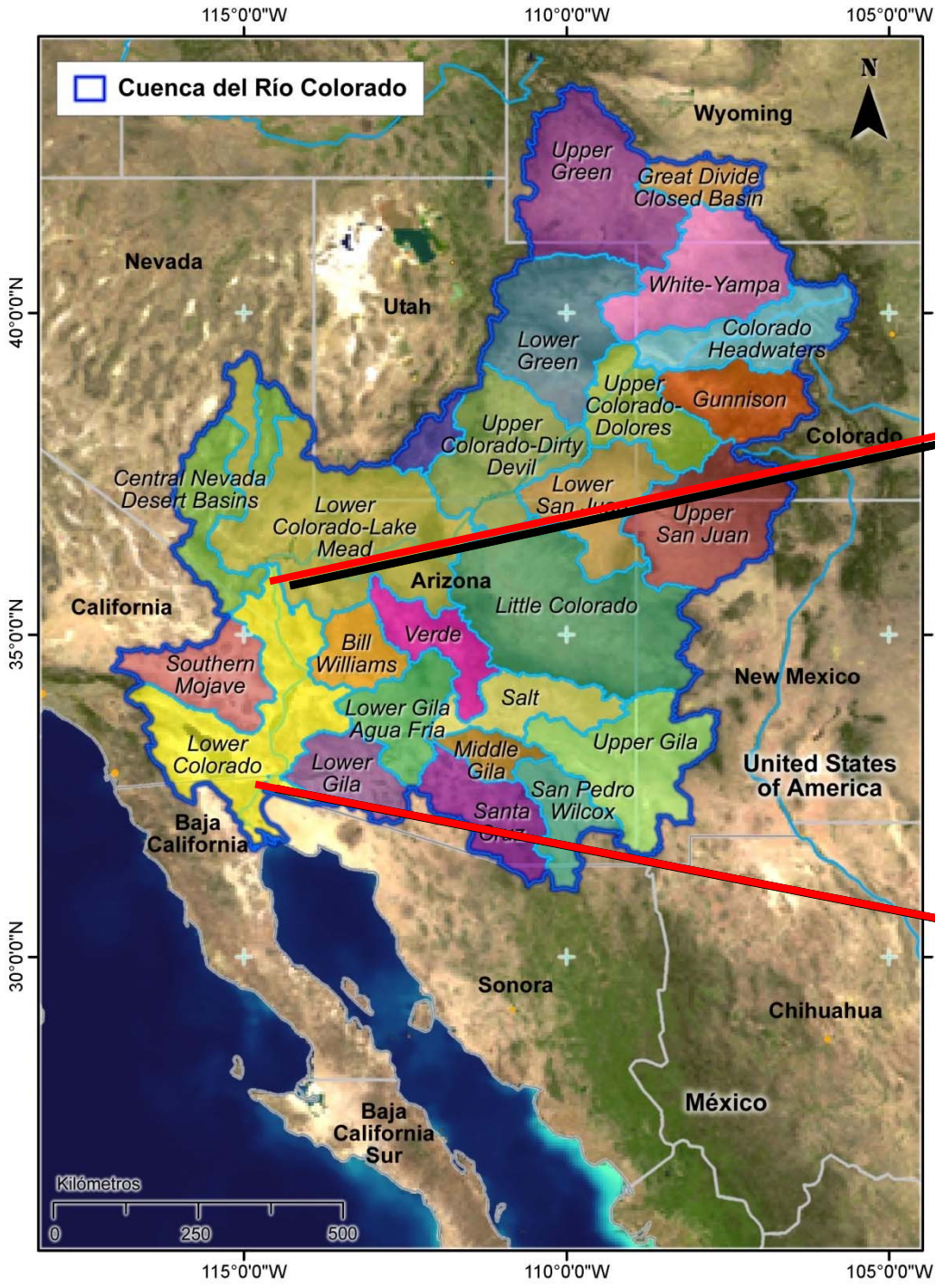


Colorado River

- 630,000 km²
- 9 states
 - 2 in Mexico
 - 7 in USA
- 80% precip is snow
- Storage > 4x annual yield

Water Supply Reliability





The New York Times

September 27, 2010: Water Use in Southwest Heads for a Day of Reckoning

“LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, Nev. —
A once-unthinkable day is looming on the Colorado River. Barring a sudden end to the Southwest’s 11-year drought, the distribution of the river’s dwindling bounty is likely to be reordered as early as next year because the flow of water cannot keep pace with the region’s demands.”

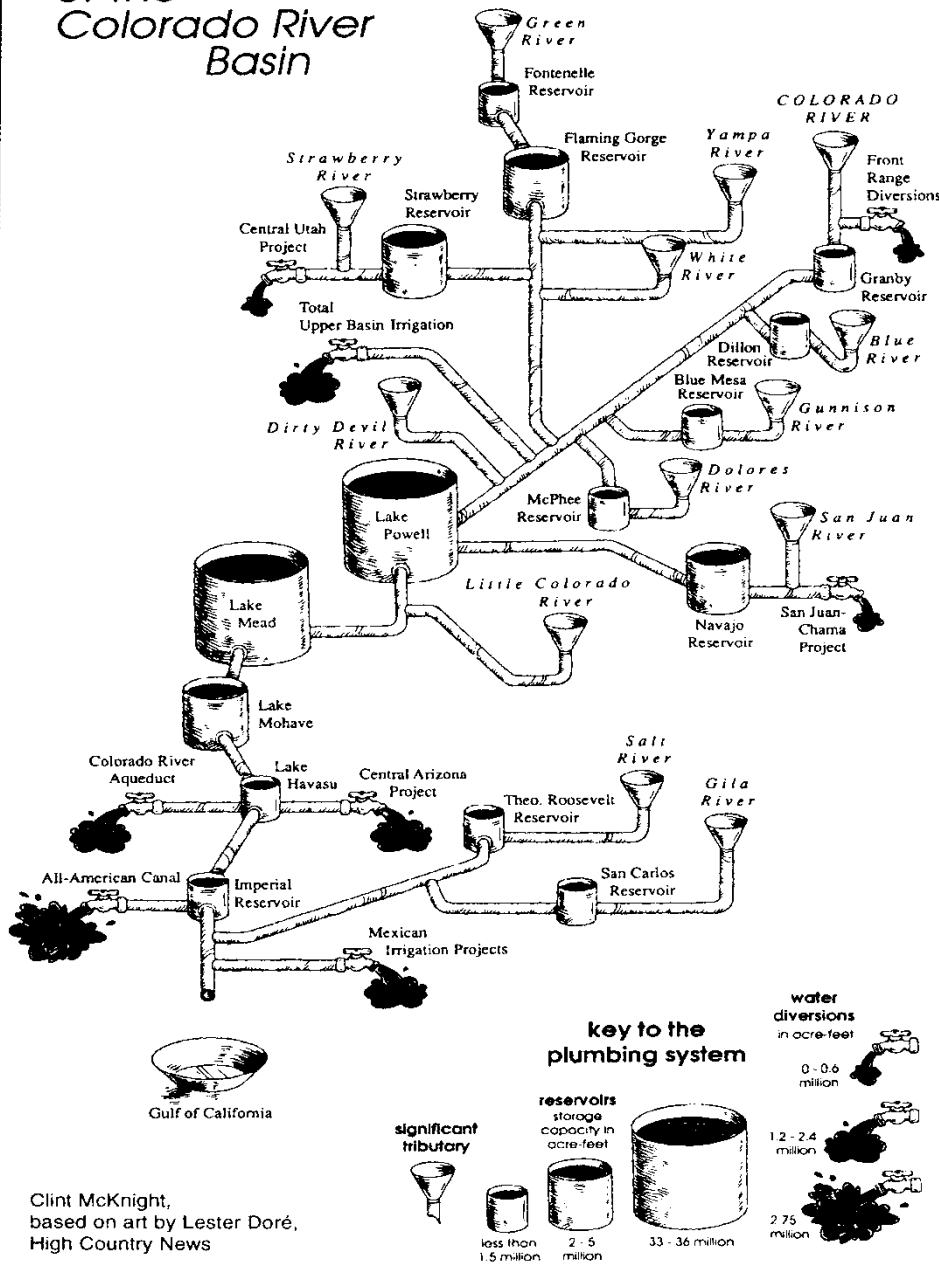
Water Supply Reliability

Why are we running out of water?

- River is Over-allocated
- Population Growth
- Drought since 2001

...is it caused by Global Warming?

the plumbing of the Colorado River Basin



Clint McKnight,
based on art by Lester Doré,
High Country News

- Colorado River legally over-allocated

16.5 MAF accounted for in the Law of the River; +/- 13.5 MAF is reconstructed natural flow (or yield) at Lee Ferry based on tree ring studies

- Mexico: 1.5 MAF
- US: 15 MAF split between Upper and Lower Basins
 - Lower Basin uses full allocation
 - Upper Basin use not fully developed

Water Supply Reliability



Las Vegas

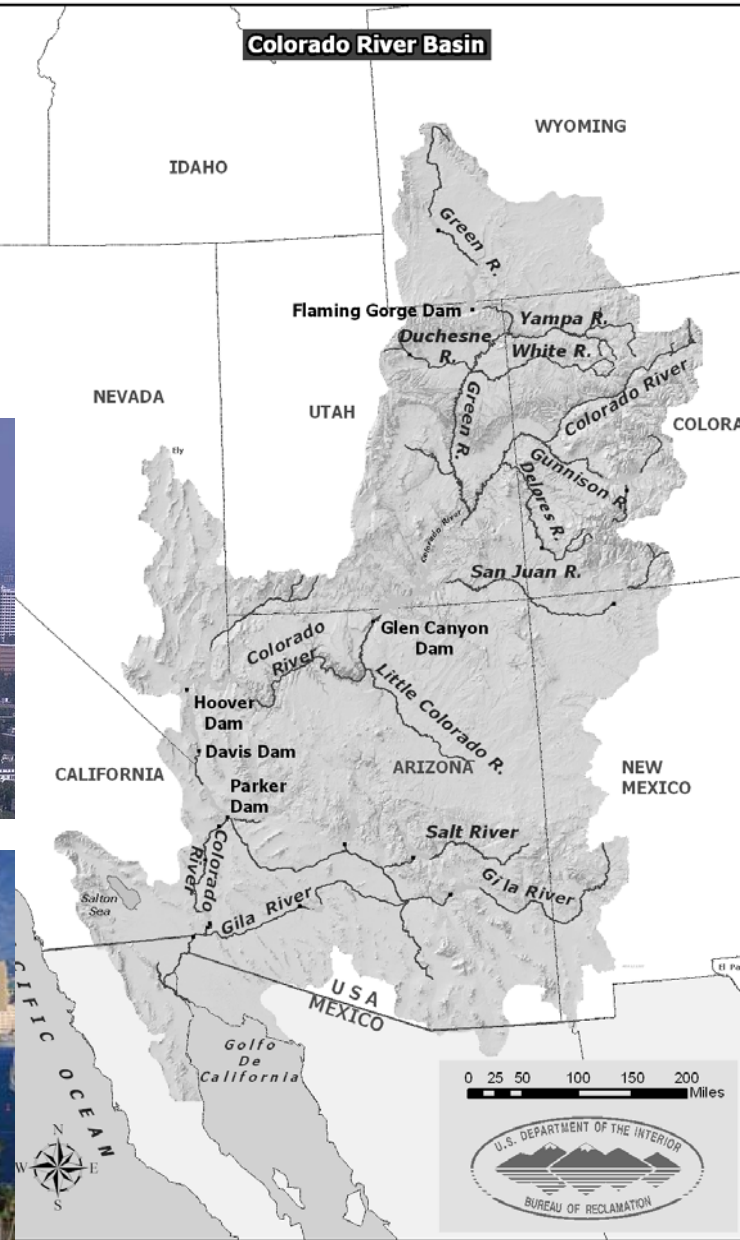


Los Angeles



San Diego

DEFENSE FUND



Denver

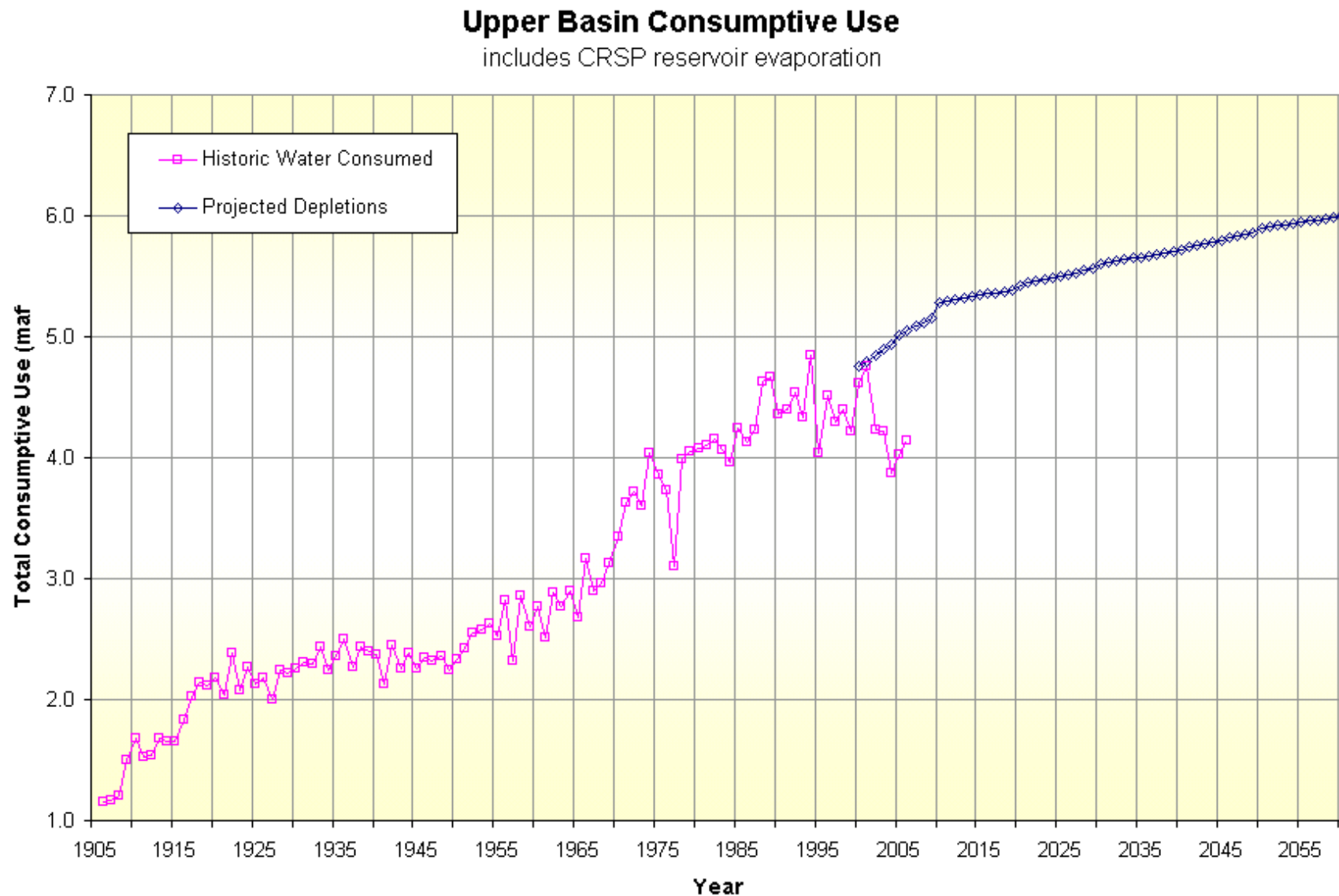


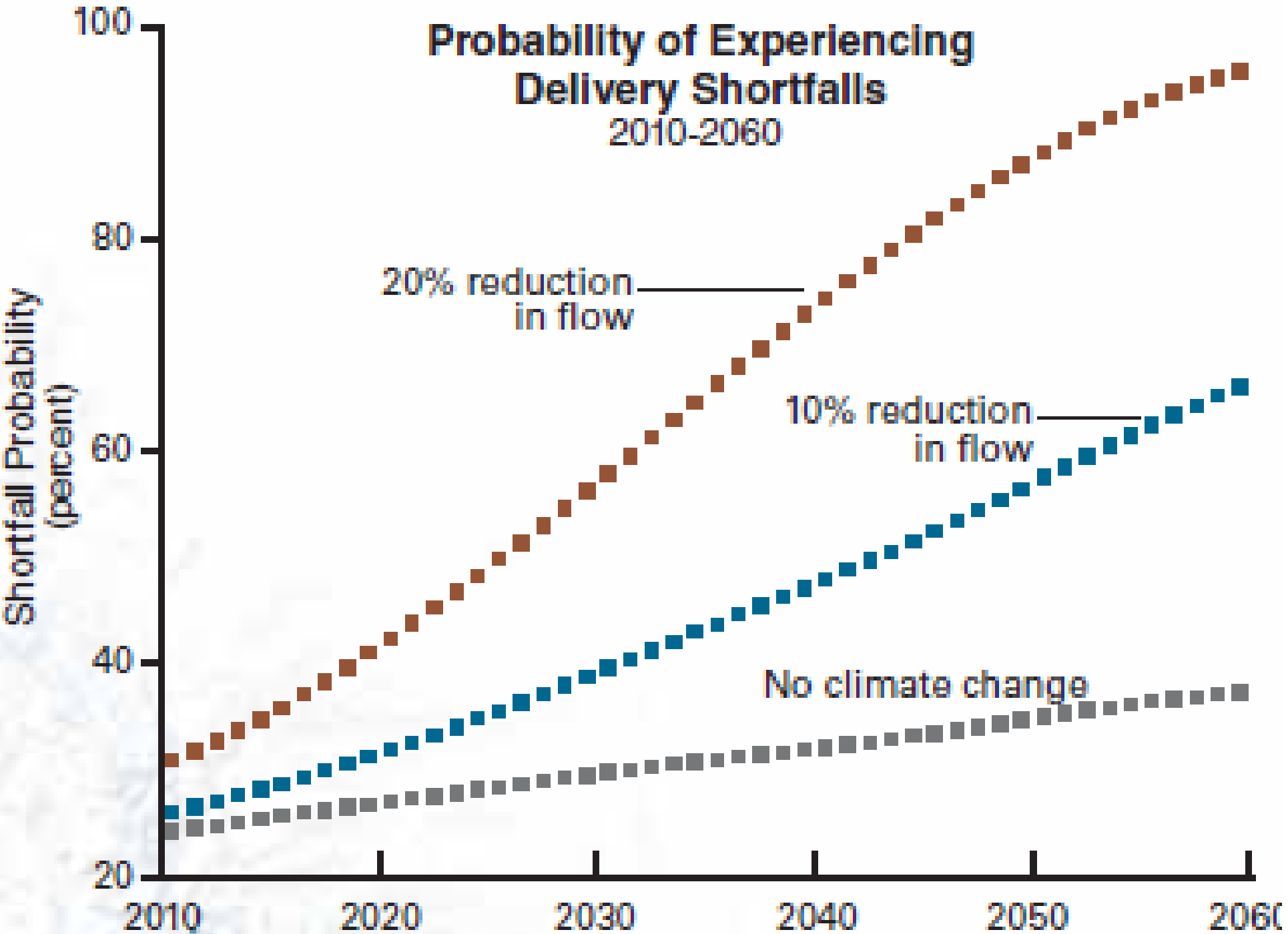
Phoenix



Mexicali

Upper Basin Depletion Schedule





Headed for a Crisis?

- “Law of the River” has been changed many times
 - Historically through court decisions
 - In recent past through consensus agreements
- Can we find flexibility?

Crisis Avoidance

- 2007 US agreement
 - Reduce uses before we run out of water in storage
 - Balance reservoirs
 - Allow for water banking
- Potential to extend this kind of agreement to Mexico?

US-Mexico Negotiations

- Supply management
- Water banking
- US investments in conservation and desalination in Mexico
- Environmental Flows

