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**US & WORLD NEWS**

## States reliant on Colorado River fail to meet the latest deadline to find consensus

By *Associated Press*

Updated Feb 14, 2026 4:28 p.m.





FILE - The Colorado River in the upper River Basin is seen, May 29, 2021, in Lees Ferry, Ariz.  
Ross D. Franklin/AP

PHOENIX (AP) — The seven Western states that depend on the Colorado River missed a deadline for the second time Saturday to agree on a plan addressing record drought and water shortages.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo released a joint statement calling on Upper Basin states to offer more concessions. Those states include Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

“The Colorado River is essential to our communities and economies, and our states have conserved large volumes of water in recent years to stabilize the basin’s water supplies for years to come,” the governors said. “Our stance remains firm and fair: all seven basin states must share in the responsibility of conservation.”

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Arizona, California and Nevada have offered to decrease Colorado River allocation by 27%, 10% and 17%, respectively, according to those states.

Colorado Sen. John Hickenlooper, who helped negotiate a river contingency plan in 2019 as governor, called the situation in the Colorado Basin "dire," pointing to the state's low snowpack.



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"If we don't address this problem together -- head-on and fast -- our communities, farms, and economies will suffer. The best path forward is the one we take together. Litigation won't solve the problem of this long-term aridification," Hickenlooper said in a statement.

John Entsminger, the general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, also expressed frustration at the lack of progress.

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"The actions we have taken over the past two-plus decades are less about raising Lake Mead's elevation than they are about protecting ourselves if things go from bad to worse," Entsminger said in a statement.

The states previously let pass a November deadline set by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to devise a strategy to face water shortages after this year, when current guidelines will expire.

Over 40 million people across these states along with Mexico and Native American tribes rely on Colorado River water. The river is crucial to farming as well as water and electricity for millions of homes and businesses. Much of the water starts out as winter

mountain snowfall in the Upper Basin, which amasses far more that way than it consumes. Lower Basin states, including agriculture-heavy regions, are bigger consumers.

Major cities including Denver, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Las Vegas, Phoenix and Los Angeles, are also big water consumers. Chronic overuse, drought and rising temperatures linked to climate change have lessened water flows.

How the water is allocated — especially in dry spells — and conserved has been the center of agreements among the states for decades. The original 1922 Colorado River Compact was calculated based on water amounts that doesn't exist today, especially with the long-term drought.

The current round of negotiations among states have been going on over two years.

If no consensus can be reached, the federal government could step in and devise a plan that leaves parties dissatisfied and could even result in litigation.

Scientists recently found snow cover and snow depth in the West are at their lowest in decades. Some areas have seen their warmest December through early February. Normally, snow cover this time of year spans 460,000 square miles — about the size of California, Utah, Idaho and Montana. But, this year it is only California-sized, about 155,000 square miles, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center.

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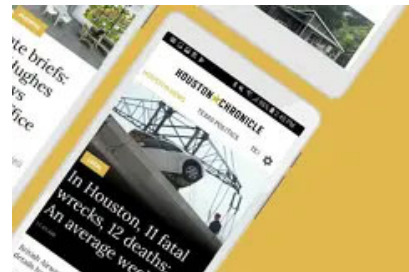
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