

## Colorado River Basin Drought

### Interior Department Launches New, Interactive Web Tool to Show Effects of 16-Year Drought in the Colorado River Basin

<https://www.doi.gov/water/owdi.cr.drought/en/index.html>

**WASHINGTON** – On the heels of a White House Roundtable on Water Innovation, the U.S. Department of the Interior today launched a new, interactive website to show the dramatic effects of the 16-year drought in the Colorado River Basin. The specialized web tool, otherwise known as [Drought in the Colorado River Basin – Insights Using Open Data](#) shows the interconnected results of a reduced water supply as reservoir levels have declined from nearly full to about 50 percent of capacity.

Launched as part of a broader effort by the Obama Administration to harness resources that help build drought resiliency, this web tool provides a visual depiction of the complexity of the nexus between water supply, water demand, and long-term drought in the Colorado River Basin by connecting data from a variety of sources affiliated with the [Open Water Data Initiative](#), which is led by Interior’s U.S. Geological Survey.

“Innovation is absolutely critical to helping us deal with the severe threats to water supply posed by drought and climate change,” said Interior Deputy Secretary Michael L. Connor, who moderated a discussion on innovation and technology at yesterday’s Roundtable. “Projects like this one show the power of open data to help us better understand our resource challenges. By enabling us to see the complex challenges in the Colorado River Basin visually, use of this website will help us devise timely actions to build resilience to the drought, spurring innovation along the way.”

Projections developed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the federal agency responsible for managing the Colorado River, indicate that if the drought continues, the lower Colorado River Basin (Arizona, Nevada, Southern California) could see its first reductions in water deliveries -- with an 18 percent chance of a shortage of legally mandated water delivery -- as early as 2017. In response, federal agencies are collaborating with stakeholders, states, tribes and local agencies to develop creative strategies to reduce the impacts of drought and increase reservoir storage at Lake Powell and Lake Mead. At the Roundtable, Interior also announced its [Natural Resource Investment Center](#), which will use market-based tools and innovative public-private collaborations to increase investment in water conservation and critical water infrastructure.

The anticipated outcome of improved access to real-time data is that more people can engage in developing more complex automated data processing tools. A public “marketplace” is also envisioned where innovators inside and outside government can feature open source tools that are based on data liberated through the Open Water Data Initiative.

The Initiative builds on previous data-related efforts, including a 2013 Presidential Executive Order to make government data more open and machine readable, and the 2014 Climate Data Initiative. This multi-year initiative will build upon existing geospatial and observed data and use tools to explore the feasibility and demonstrate the utility of integrating water data. It supports current trends in application of big data while advancing the White House Open Data Policy ([data.gov](http://data.gov)) by using recognized standards and web service technologies to spur innovation. To view the web tool, visit <https://www.doi.gov/water/owdi.cr.drought/en/index.html>.