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If management of the Colorado River were a business, it would be entering bankruptcy. The river's liabilities exceed its assets and its cash reserves are dangerously low. The river's management cannot deliver on its contracts and there is no plan to re-organize. It didn't have to be this way. Warnings about the consequences of over-allocation have been ignored for almost 50 years. Warnings about the consequences of climate change have been ignored and dismissed for 25 years. Until now.

The States may not be up to the task of meeting the current challenges. There may not be sufficient time for the States to agree on how to distribute the needed cuts. I have just now come from the CRWUA meeting. Past performance is, sadly, a guide to future returns. The States cannot move quickly enough and do not adequately represent all the stakeholders. The States have a history of just kicking the can down the road in the hopes of good snowpack next year. Saber-rattling by DOI may not be enough anymore.

Indeed, stationarity is dead: both with regard to climate-driven hydrology and with regard to 100-year old rules and policies. Explicit recognition of this fact by BoR officials and others was refreshing. The science of the river has been ignored for too long.

Excess consumption by the lower basin is driving the shortfall more than a lack of delivery by the upper basin.

In the short term, I suggest cutting the cutting the upper basin states by 1.0 maf and the lower basin states' annual allocations by 3 maf in proportion to their existing allocations. The Central Arizona Project's low priority relative to California cannot be honored.

2.8/7.5 37.3% 1.12 maf Arizona
4.4/7.5 58.7% 1.76 maf California
0.3/7.5 4% 0.012 maf Nevada

Mexico should share per the existing DCP.

Post 2026, a new governance structure needs to be in place: one that manages with the river (allocations based on a 5-year rolling average of the river's flow) and one that includes tribes, Mexico and NGO advocates for the river's ecosystems.

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