California and the Colorado River

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Executive Director
Colorado River Board of California

Colorado River Board of California

- Established in 1937
- State agency charged with protecting California's rights and interests in the resources of the Colorado River
- Members include six major Colorado River water and power users in California, state agencies, and two public members:

Coachella Valley Water District

IID — A century of service

LA DWP Los Angeles Department of Water & Power

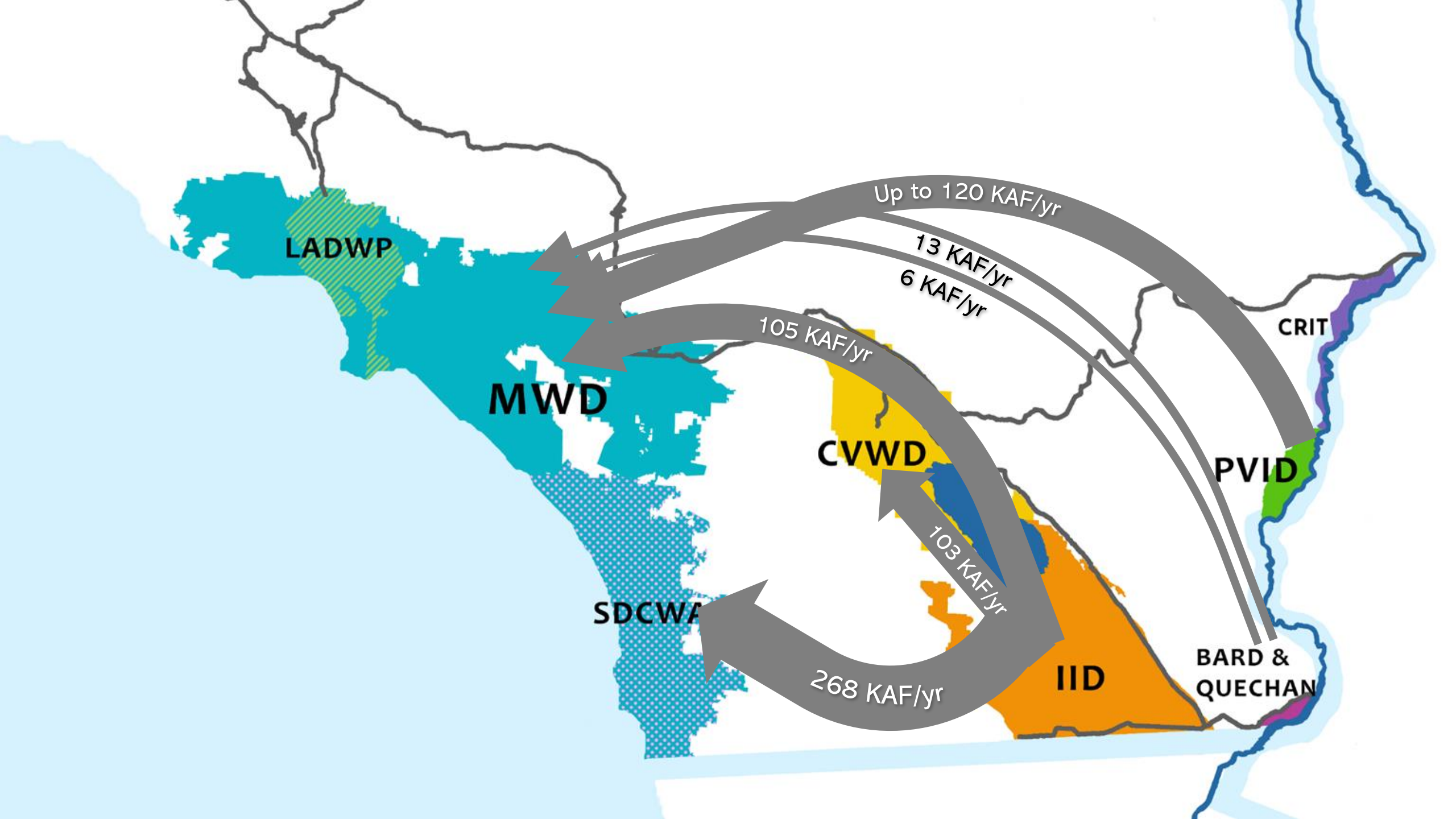
California Department of Fish & Wildlife

Department of Water Resources, State of California

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

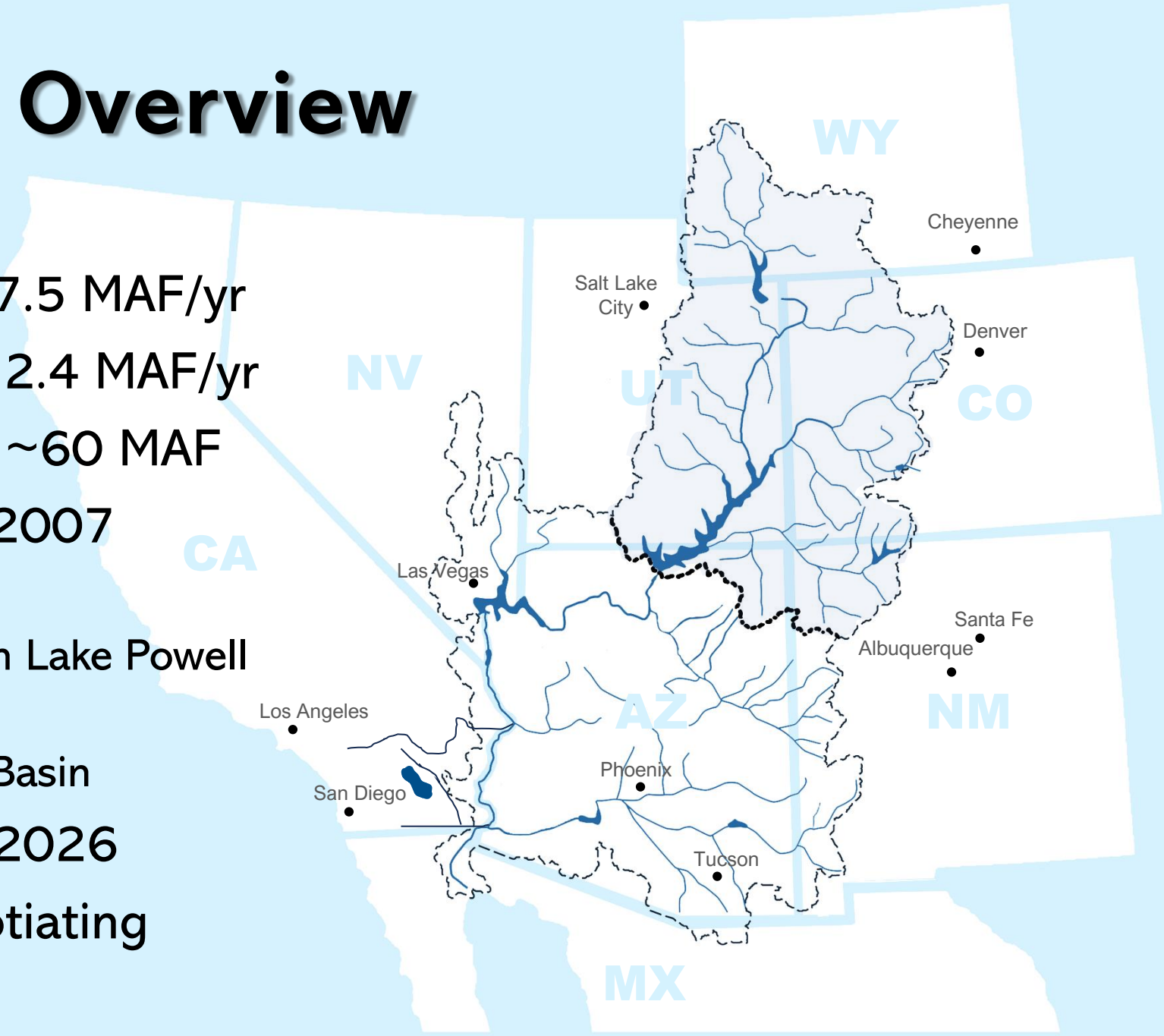
Palo Verde Irrigation District — P.V.I.D. — Blythe, California

San Diego County Water Authority


LADWP
MWD
SDCWA
CVWD
IID
PVID
CRIT
BARD &
QUECHAN
Up to 120 KAF/yr
13 KAF/yr
6 KAF/yr
105 KAF/yr
103 KAF/yr
268 KAF/yr

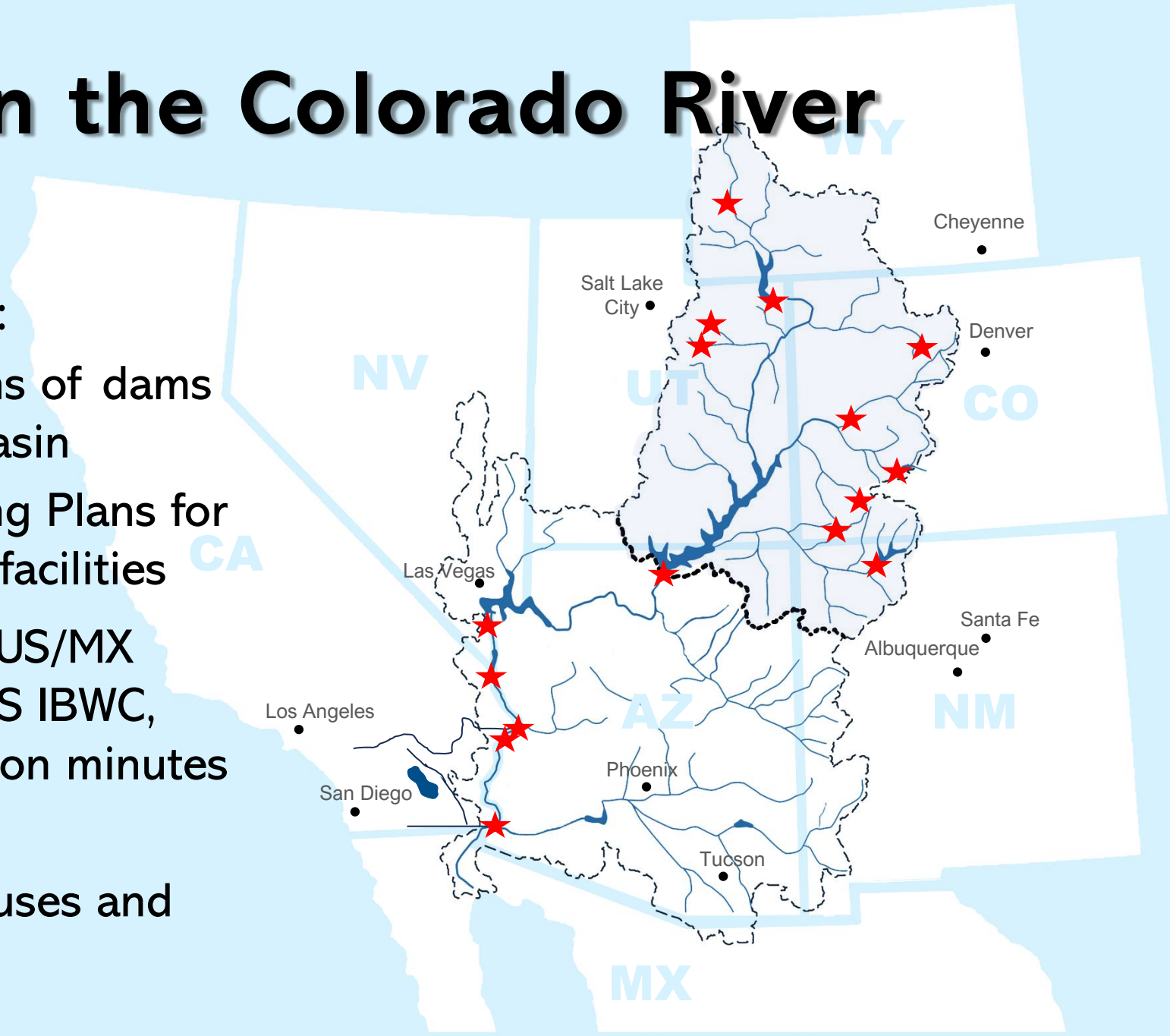
Colorado River Overview

- 1922 Compact allocates 17.5 MAF/yr
- 2000-2024 natural flow: 12.4 MAF/yr
- Total system storage up to ~60 MAF
- Currently operating under 2007 Interim Guidelines, which:
  - Coordinate releases between Lake Powell and Lake Mead
  - Set shortages in the Lower Basin
- 2007 Guidelines expire in 2026
- Basin States currently negotiating successor guidelines



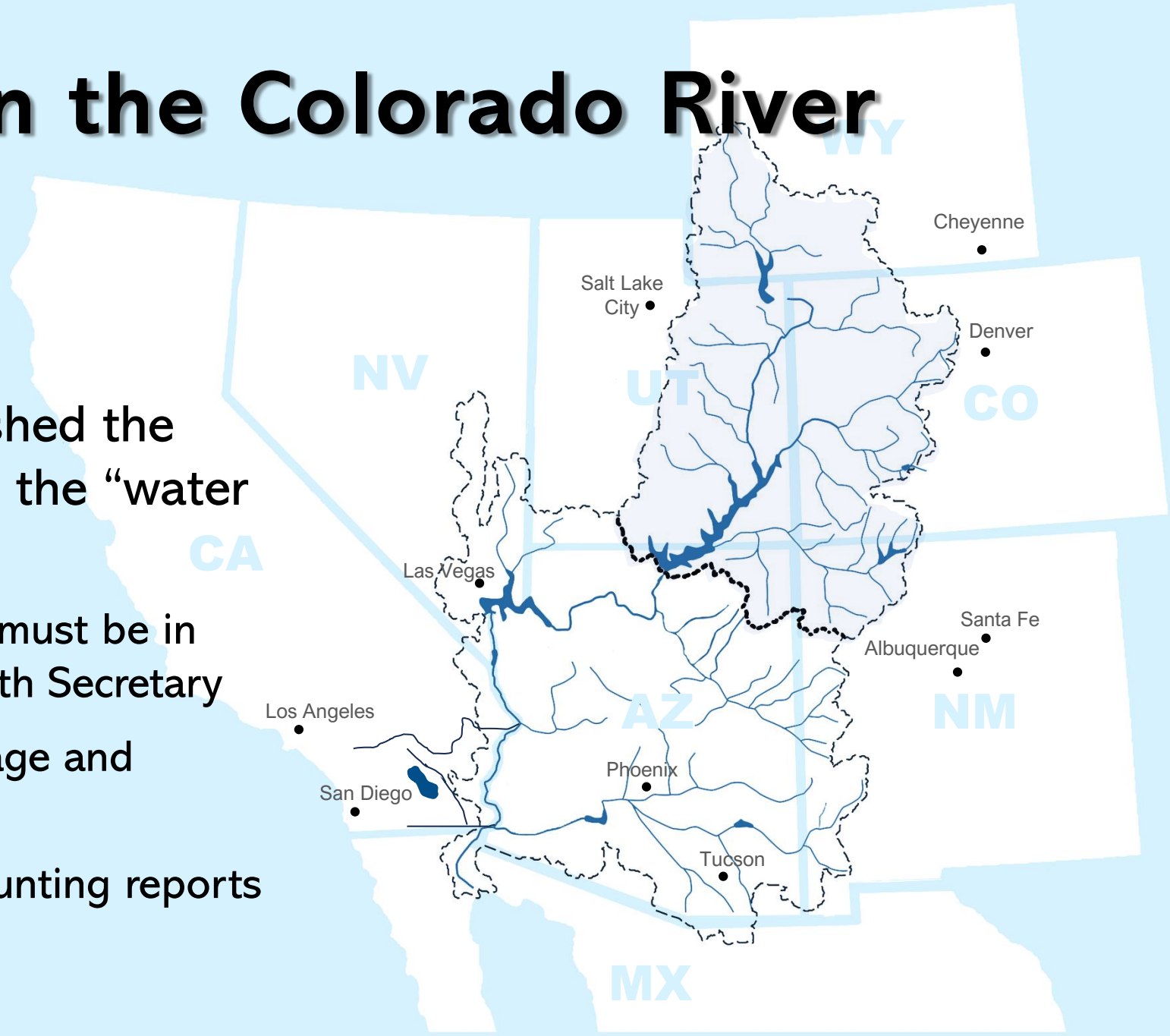
Federal Role on the Colorado River

- The Bureau of Reclamation:
  - Owns and operates dozens of dams and facilities across the basin
  - Develops Annual Operating Plans for storage and release at its facilities
  - Releases water to satisfy US/MX Treaty coordinates with US IBWC, Mexico, and Basin States on minutes to the Treaty
  - Reports on consumptive uses and losses across the basin



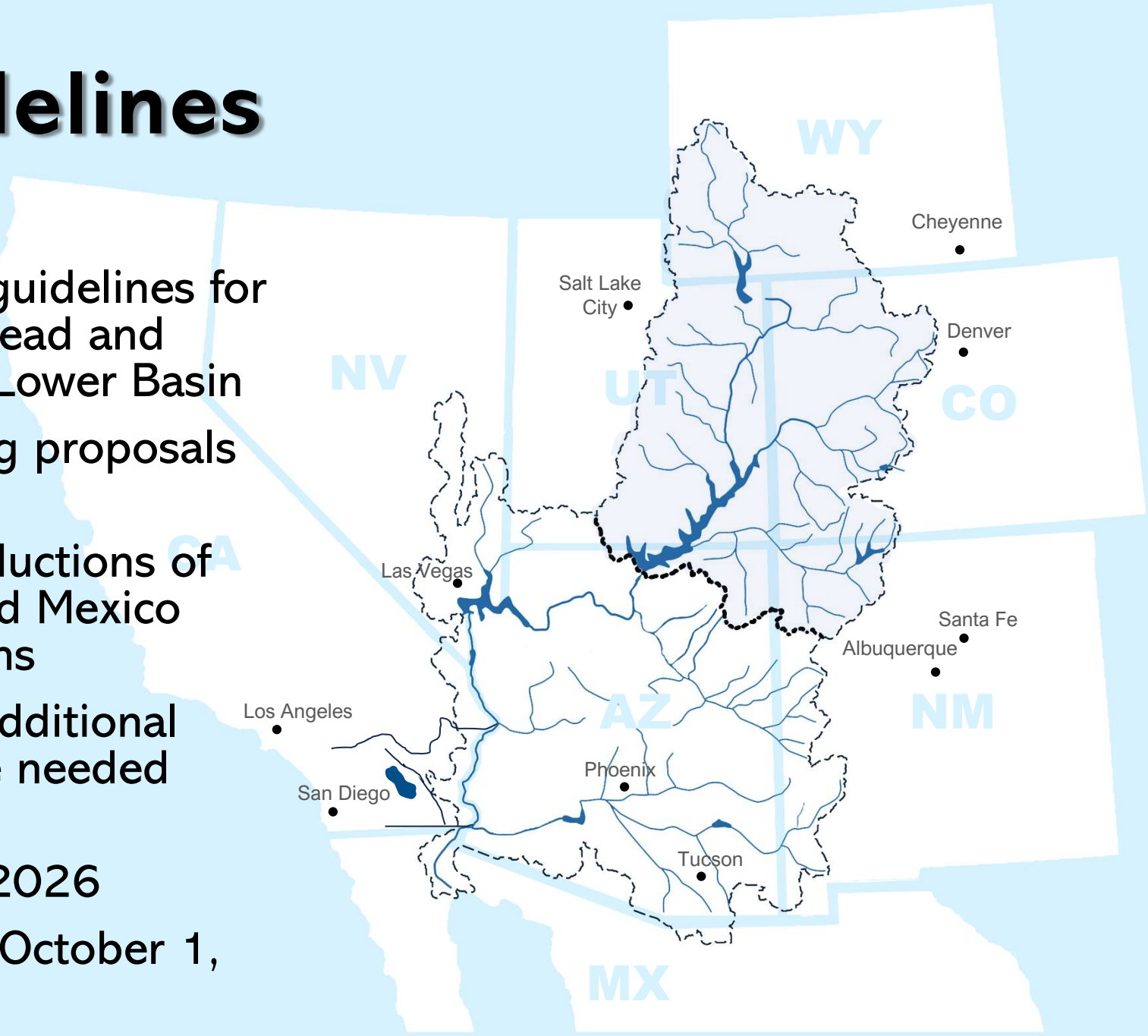
Federal Role on the Colorado River

- *Arizona v. California* established the Secretary of the Interior as the "water master" in the Lower Basin
  - Releases from Hoover Dam must be in satisfaction of a contract with Secretary
  - Secretary determines shortage and surplus
  - Prepares annual water accounting reports



Post 2026 Guidelines

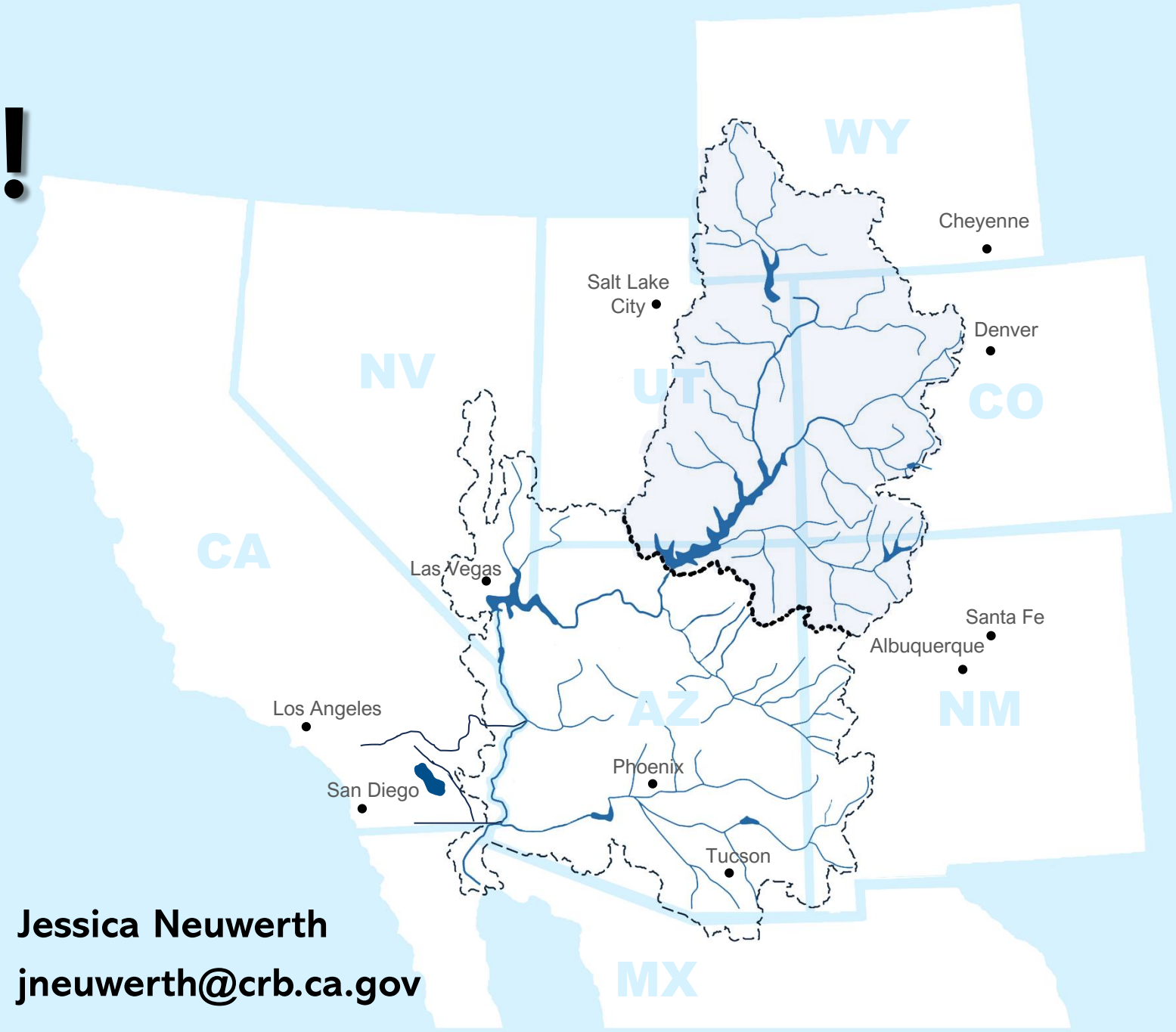
- Reclamation developing new guidelines for operating Lakes Powell and Mead and determining shortages in the Lower Basin
- Basin States submitted dueling proposals in 2024
- Lower Basin has proposed reductions of 1.5 MAF/yr in Lower Basin and Mexico under most reservoir conditions
- Negotiations are focused on additional reductions, which will likely be needed under dry conditions
- Draft EIS released January 9, 2026
- Final EIS and ROD needed by October 1, 2026



Barriers to a Basin States Deal

- Role of the Upper Basin
  - Lower Basin believes Upper Basin must release a steady supply of water downstream, but have offered to share impacts of drought
  - Upper Basin believes they should be allowed to develop additional water use and aren't required to reduce uses
- Logistical challenges: more diffuse management and accounting in Upper Basin, less federal control
- Compressed timeframe to reach agreement

Thank you!



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