

Land of Snow to Land of Sun, Colorado River Management with, Dr. Jack Schmidt

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06/05/2020

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The USA shares the Colorado River with Mexico. It brings water to 7 states. Over 40 million people depend on the Colorado River. In this episode we pay homage to the Colorado river with Dr. Jack Schmidt, leader of USU's Colorado studies.

Water is diverted to central Arizona, Southern California, Southern Nevada, some of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States. Did you know that between November and April, 90% of green veggies consumed in the US and Canada are grown in the distant southern end of the Colorado river basin? Along with being a vital water supply in the west, it also flows through various landscape recognized throughout the world – Canyonland, Dinosaur National Monument, Southern Colorado Plateau, and the Grand Canyon.

“What kind of environmental future can we have while meeting society means, and how much of a sacrifice would we have to make to meet those needs?” Jack Schmidt goes into the issues surrounding the Grand Canyon; it's shrinkage amidst the rising demand for its water. This issue stems back to 1922 when the Colorado compact was created. 7 states negotiated their own amounts of water usage from the Colorado River, which was assumed to be a certain size, but now the river is smaller. Some states ignore this issue or make agreements based on the approximate sizing from when the compact was made. Additionally, Native American tribes are now beginning to articulate how the water is being used and allocated. According to Schmidt, “50% of all Navajo reservations have no water.” They have also had massive outbreak

of Corona Virus which is concerning since there is not enough water for proper sanitization. The conversation leads into ways to help, like conserving water usage and looking into research to find innovate ways to bring more water into the river.

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Jack Schmidt is a USU researcher and Professor of Watershed Sciences and Janet Quinney Lawson Chair Member at the Center for Colorado River Studies. Schmidt has devoted 30 years of research to the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River that flows through it, focused on the relationship of ecosystem health and the dams, reservoirs, and diversions associated with river management. In both his university and government research, Jack has worked to encourage collaboration between federal and state agencies, tribal interests, non-governmental organization and academic institutions. He has received the National Park Service's Director's Award for Natural Resource Research.

