

Drying of the American West

PART A: Reservoirs on the Colorado River

1. Consider what the "squiggly lines" on the graphs really mean... Use the graph of Lake Mead levels to describe a brief history of the reservoir. Tell when and how the reservoir got started, how long it took to fill, and mention events that affected its level.

2. When Lake Powell began filling in 1963, water was diverted from Lake Mead, causing its level to drop. Beginning in 1964, how long did it take to capture enough water to fill both of the large reservoirs?

3. The levels of Lake Powell and Lake Mead both show steep declines after 1999. What are the things that control the level of a reservoir?

PART B: What's Responsible for Lower Reservoir Levels?

4. Compare snowpack in a watershed to a dam on a river. How are they alike? How are they different?

5. What effect does the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) have on water supplies to the Colorado River Basin?

6. How does increasing population of sunbelt cities in the Lower Colorado River Basin contribute to lowering reservoir levels?

7. In your own words, describe what's responsible for lower reservoir levels in the Colorado River Basin.

8. List at least 3 possible impacts of the decline in water storage on the Colorado River.

