

Nevada runs on the Colorado River. That river is shrinking — and your capital plan can't stand still.

Ninety percent of Southern Nevada's water comes from a single, declining source. Add record-low snowpack up north, the strictest conservation laws in the country, and a wave of federal funding, and every one of those forces reshuffles the projects on your list. Invizion helps Nevada utilities re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click — and defend every decision.

300K¹ Acre-foot Colorado River allocation — the smallest of the seven basin states, for one of the fastest-growing regions.	90%² Share of Southern Nevada's water that comes from the Colorado River, via Lake Mead.	~31%⁴ Lake Mead's remaining capacity — a drop below 1,050 ft triggers a deeper Tier 2 cut.	\$6.4B³ Nevada's 20-year drinking-water infrastructure need in the EPA's latest survey.
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THE NEVADA LANDSCAPE

Four forces are moving your project list at once

None of these is theoretical, and none of them waits for your next budget cycle. Together they mean the capital plan you approved last year may already be the wrong plan.

SUPPLY — COLORADO RIVER

One source, and it's declining

About 90% of Southern Nevada's water comes from the Colorado River,² drawn against the smallest allocation of any basin state — 300,000 acre-feet.¹ 2026 is the fifth straight year of shortage cuts, reducing Nevada's supply by 21,000 acre-feet³

Lake Mead sits near 31% of capacity, and dropping below 1,050 feet triggers a deeper Tier 2 cut.⁴ The post-2026 operating guidelines are still being negotiated — so utilities are planning capital against a supply number that isn't settled.

INFRASTRUCTURE — THE RESPONSE

You're already engineering around a shrinking lake

Nevada's answer to a falling Lake Mead has been capital-intensive: the "third straw" intake (\$817M, 2015) and the Low Lake Level Pumping Station (\$522M, 2020) let the region keep pumping even if the lake reaches dead pool.⁵

That scale of investment is exactly why sequencing matters. When supply, funding, and demand all move, the order you build in decides what gets delivered — and what gets deferred.

DEMAND — CONSERVATION LAW

Growth met by mandate, not just supply

Southern Nevada has cut per-capita water use 58% since 2002 while adding population, and recycles nearly all indoor water back to Lake Mead for return-flow credits.⁷ The nation's first nonfunctional-turf ban takes full effect in 2027.⁶

Conservation is now infrastructure: turf conversion, recycled-water expansion, and metering are capital programs competing with renewal and growth for the same dollars.

COMPLIANCE — AGING & QUALITY

Renewal, mandates, and a thinner northern snowpack

Nevada carries roughly \$6.4 billion in 20-year drinking-water needs.⁸ Lead service line replacement is now funded and on a federal clock,¹³ and PFAS monitoring is expanding statewide.¹²

Up north, 2026 brought record-low snowpack for the Truckee Meadows,¹¹ a reminder that renewal capital and supply resilience now compete on the same list.

WHO RUNS NEVADA'S WATER

Public agencies carry the load, with investor-owned systems at the edges

Unlike most states, Nevada's largest water providers are public agencies — so most rate and capital decisions are made by elected and appointed boards, in public, rather than by the state commission.

Public agencies

Rates & capital set by their own boards

Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) Wholesale · ~2.3M served

Las Vegas Valley Water District ~1.7M retail served

Truckee Meadows Water Authority Reno / Sparks · 450K+

Henderson & North Las Vegas SNWA member utilities

Colorado River Commission of Nevada State river & power management

Investor-owned utilities

Rates regulated by the PUCN

Great Basin Water Co. Spring Creek & rural systems

Smaller private & rural systems Scattered statewide

Mutual & community systems Where funding gaps hit hardest

The concentration in a few large public agencies means a handful of capital programs shape most of Nevada's water infrastructure spending — and draw the most public scrutiny.

Every capital dollar has to be defensible

Whether the decision sits with a utility board or the state commission, the question is the same: why this project, why now, why at this cost? In Nevada, most of that scrutiny happens in open board meetings.

PUCN regulates rates for investor-owned utilities only — the big public agencies (SNWA, LVVWD, TMWA) set rates through their own boards.¹⁴

Nevada State Engineer / Division of Water Resources administers water rights under prior appropriation, including over-appropriated basins now facing retirement.¹⁵

NDEP holds Safe Drinking Water Act primacy — lead service line inventories, PFAS monitoring, and the compliance capital that follows.¹⁶

Conservation is now law — the 2027 turf ban and 2023 residential-use-cap authority turn conservation targets into capital and operating obligations.⁸

The money is moving — can your plan absorb it?

Nevada utilities have more capital funding available than they've had in years. The constraint is no longer only dollars — it's readiness: which projects are shovel-ready, which qualify, and how the timing lines up with everything else on the list.

NDEP administers Nevada's Drinking Water & Clean Water State Revolving Funds.¹⁶

\$71.6M+ in first-year BIL water funding (FY2022), with roughly half available as grants or principal forgiveness for underserved communities.¹⁷

\$25.8M for lead service lines (2024), of which 49% must go to disadvantaged communities as non-repayable funds.¹³

\$6.4B in 20-year needs against that incoming funding — readiness and sequencing are the real constraints.⁸

NEVADA WATER, IN BRIEF

Questions Nevada utility leaders are asking

Short, sourced answers — the same facts we'll dig into on a call, in the context of your system.

How much Colorado River water does Nevada get, and how much is being cut?

Nevada holds a 300,000 acre-foot allocation — the smallest of the seven basin states — and about 90% of Southern Nevada's water comes from the river via Lake Mead. In 2026 a Tier 1 shortage reduces Nevada's supply by 21,000 acre-feet, the fifth consecutive year of cuts³

What happens to Nevada's Colorado River supply after 2026?

The current operating guidelines expire at the end of 2026. Lake Mead sits near 31% of capacity, and if it falls below 1,050 feet a Tier 2 shortage cuts Nevada further. Utilities are planning capital against a supply number still being renegotiated among the basin states⁴

Why did Nevada ban grass and nonfunctional turf?

Nevada's 2021 law (AB 356) bans using Colorado River water to irrigate nonfunctional turf at commercial, multi-family, and government properties in Southern Nevada, effective January 1, 2027 — the first such law in the nation. It's part of a strategy that has cut per-capita use 58% since 2002⁵

Does the PUCN set my utility's water rates?

The Public Utilities Commission of Nevada regulates only investor-owned water utilities. The largest providers — SNWA, Las Vegas Valley Water District, and Truckee Meadows Water Authority — are public agencies whose rates are set by their own boards. Either way, capital spending has to be justified to a governing body and to ratepayers¹⁴

What funding is available for Nevada water infrastructure?

NDEP administers Nevada's Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds. Nevada received more than \$71.6 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law water funding in FY2022 — roughly half as grants or principal forgiveness for underserved communities — plus \$25.8 million in 2024 for lead service line work.¹⁷¹³

How does Invizion help Nevada utilities plan capital programs?

Invizion is scenario-based capital portfolio optimization for water utilities. It lets you model how a supply cut, a funding award, or a conservation deadline reshuffles your whole project list, re-sequence the portfolio automatically, and keep a defensible record of every decision for your board or ratepayers. The best next step is a short first meeting to look at it against your own program.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every figure in this briefing is tied to a primary or authoritative source.

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ABOUT INVIZION

Capital program optimization for utilities

Invizion is a purpose-built capital lifecycle management platform for water and wastewater utilities. It integrates budgeting, CIP, scenario analysis, and funding-source tracking in one system — so utilities can re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click and demonstrate audit-ready, defensible decisions to regulators, boards, and rating agencies.

See what a defensible Nevada capital plan looks like — book a 20-minute first meeting.

Book your first meeting →