

Drought in the Colorado River Basin: Environmental Impacts

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Water Education Foundation – Colorado River Symposium
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Water development caused “drought” for
freshwater-dependent habitats

**Colorado River in Yuma c. 1900 and 2012:
Decreased water levels and spring floods result in loss of native riverside forests**



Photo: Jonathan Waterman

Salton Sea:

Declining inflows post QSA-transfer creating exposed playa, air quality impacts, habitat loss



**Colorado River Delta:
Elimination of flows resulted in near-complete loss of 1.5 million acre ecosystem**



Birds need water

Yellow-billed cuckoo



Sandhill crane



Yuma Ridgway's Rail



Yellow warbler

Photos clockwise from top left:
Mary Miguez / Audubon Photography Awards
Tara Tanaka/Audubon Photography Awards
Jesse Gordon/Audubon Photography Awards
Claudio Contreras Koob

2021 drought conditions “on the ground”

BEETLES: 20 years of impact on forests

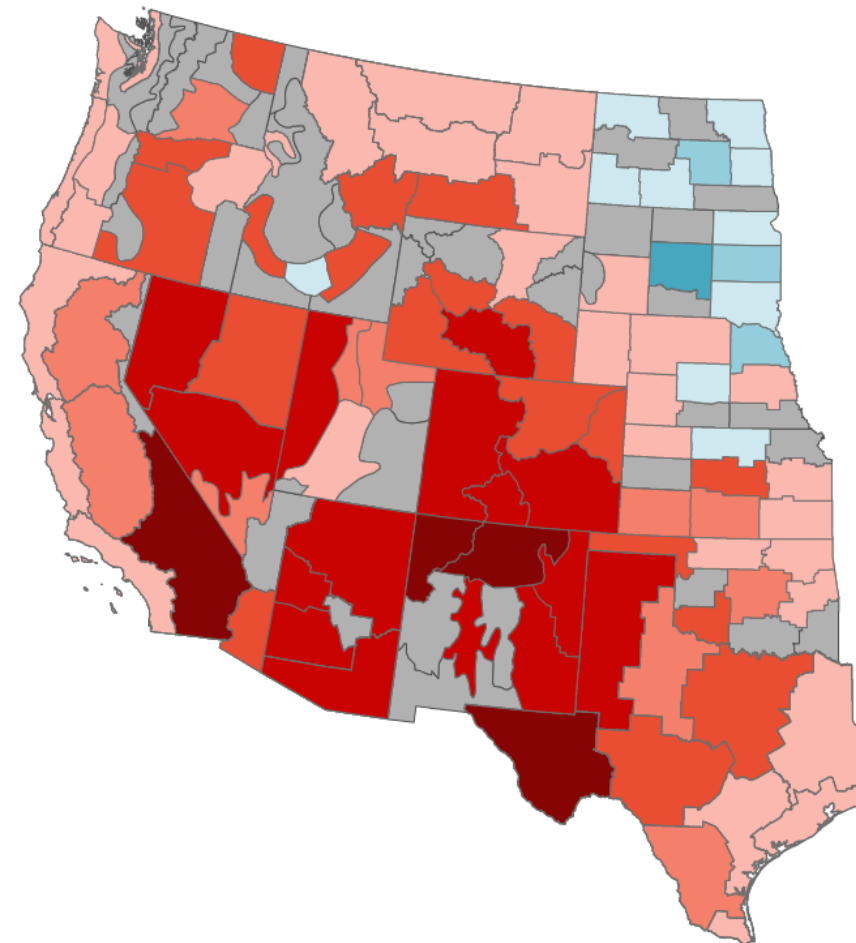
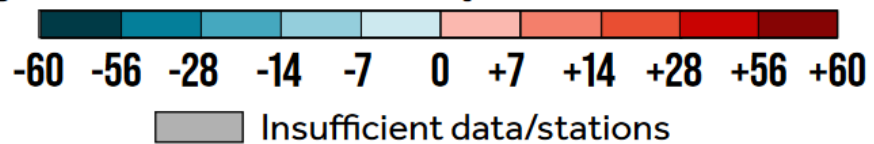


Photos: Denver Post

FIRE: Climate change causing increase in annual fire weather days

- Heat
- Low humidity
- Wind

Change in annual fire weather days 1973-2020 (total # days)



2020 Grizzly Creek Fire 32,631 acres on Colorado River above Glenwood Springs

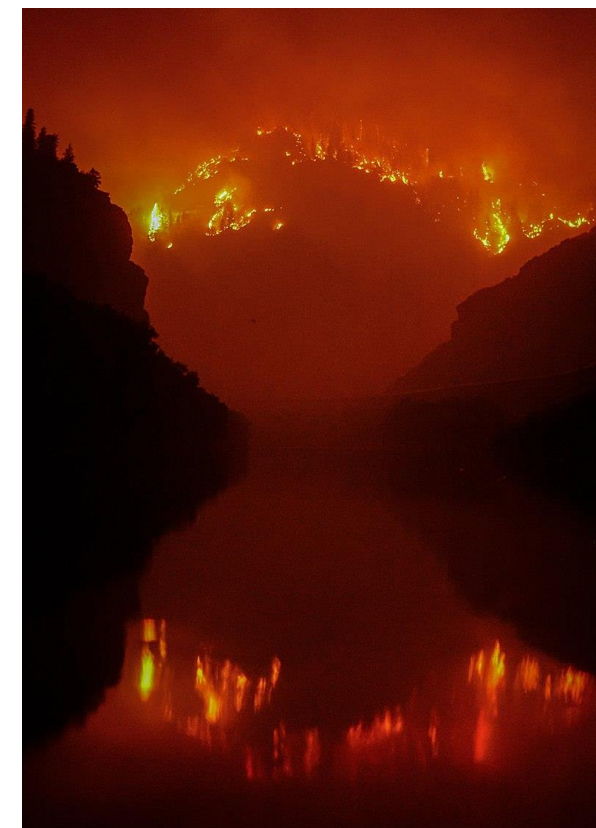
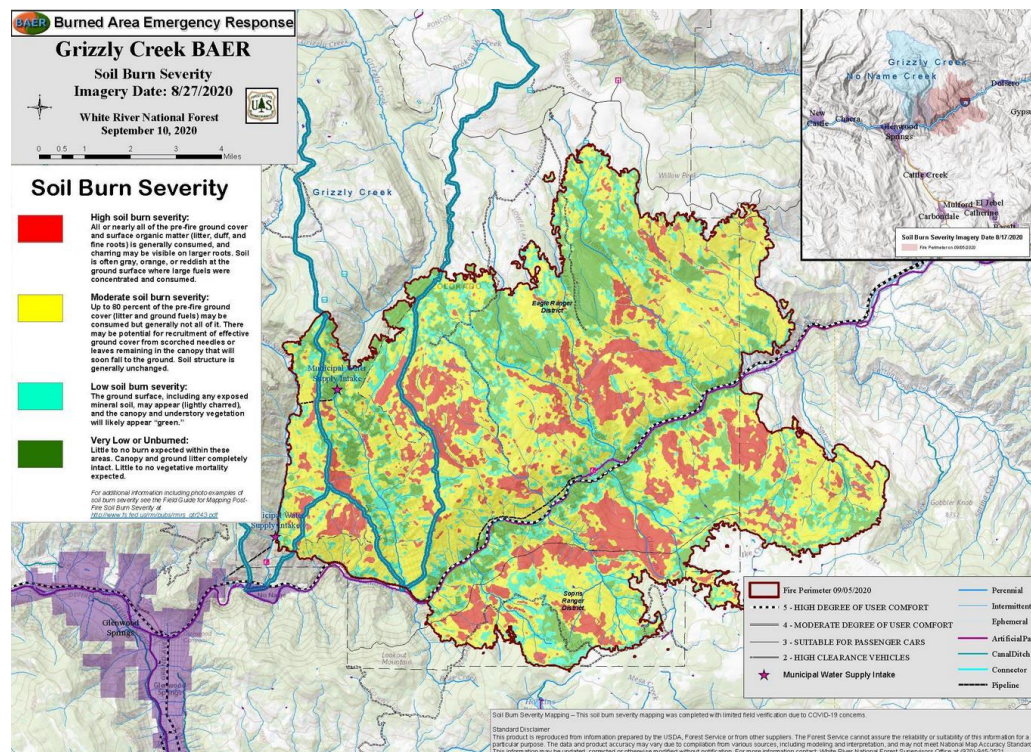


Photo: Glenwood Springs Post-Independent

2021 mudslides: highway closed in Glenwood Canyon, river choked with sediment



Photo: Hugh Carey/The Colorado Sun

2021 Water Temperature: fishing closures



Photo: Matt Stensland/Special to The Colorado Sun

2021 Dolores River below McPhee Reservoir

