



The Nature Conservancy 



Photo: James W. Kay

CSG Colorado River Forum  
September 14, 2023

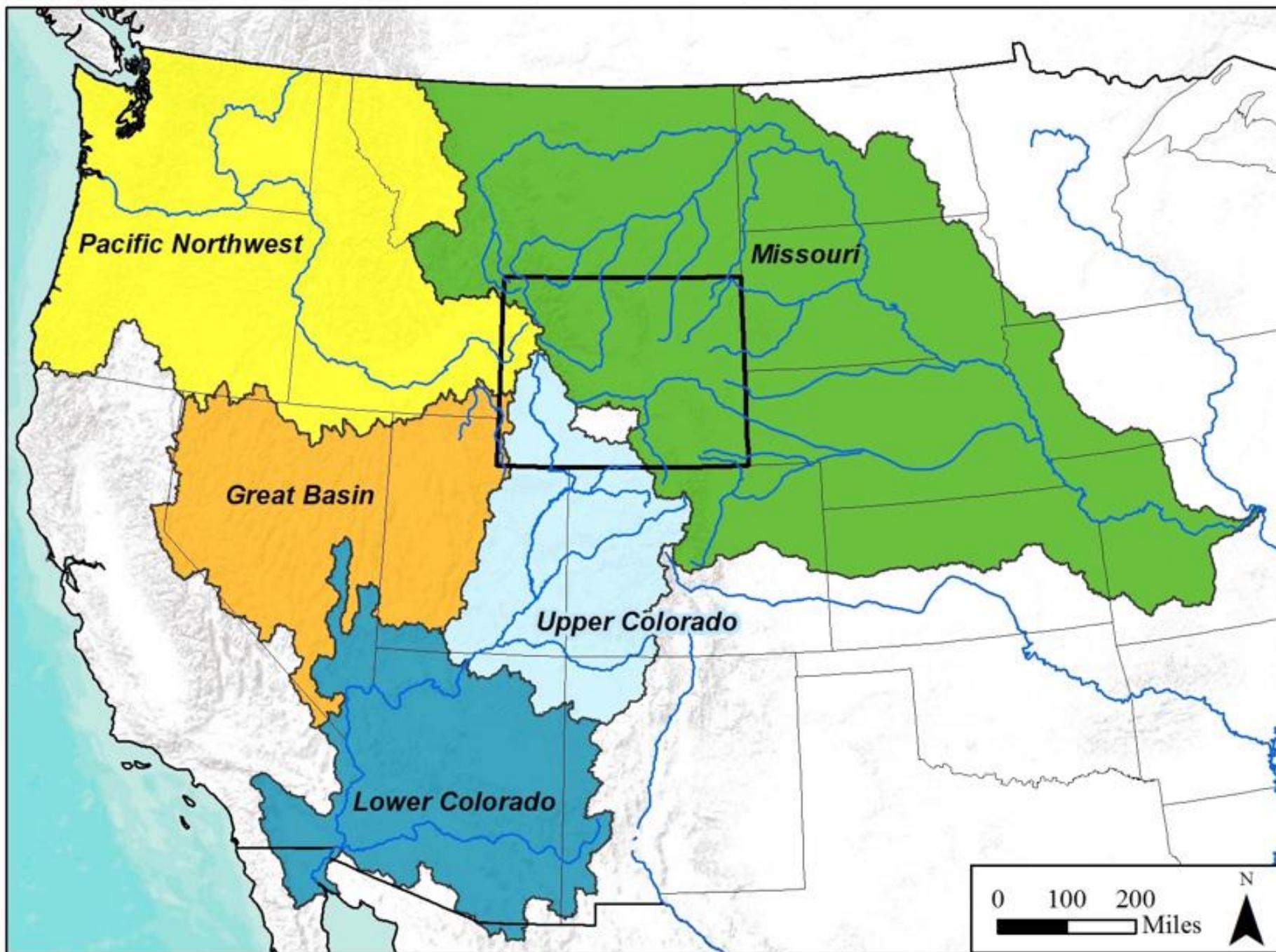
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# Colorado River Basin

- 7 US STATES, 2 MX STATES
- 40 M PEOPLE – 1 in 8
- 29 NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES
- 4-5 M ACRES OF AG
- 12 BILLION KWH
- 11 NATIONAL PARKS
- \$26B RECREATION ECONOMY
- DIVERSE & ICONIC WILDLIFE



# Wyoming Headwaters



# The Upper Green & Little Snake

## Wyoming's Portion of the Basin



**Elevation: 6,100 – 13,000+**

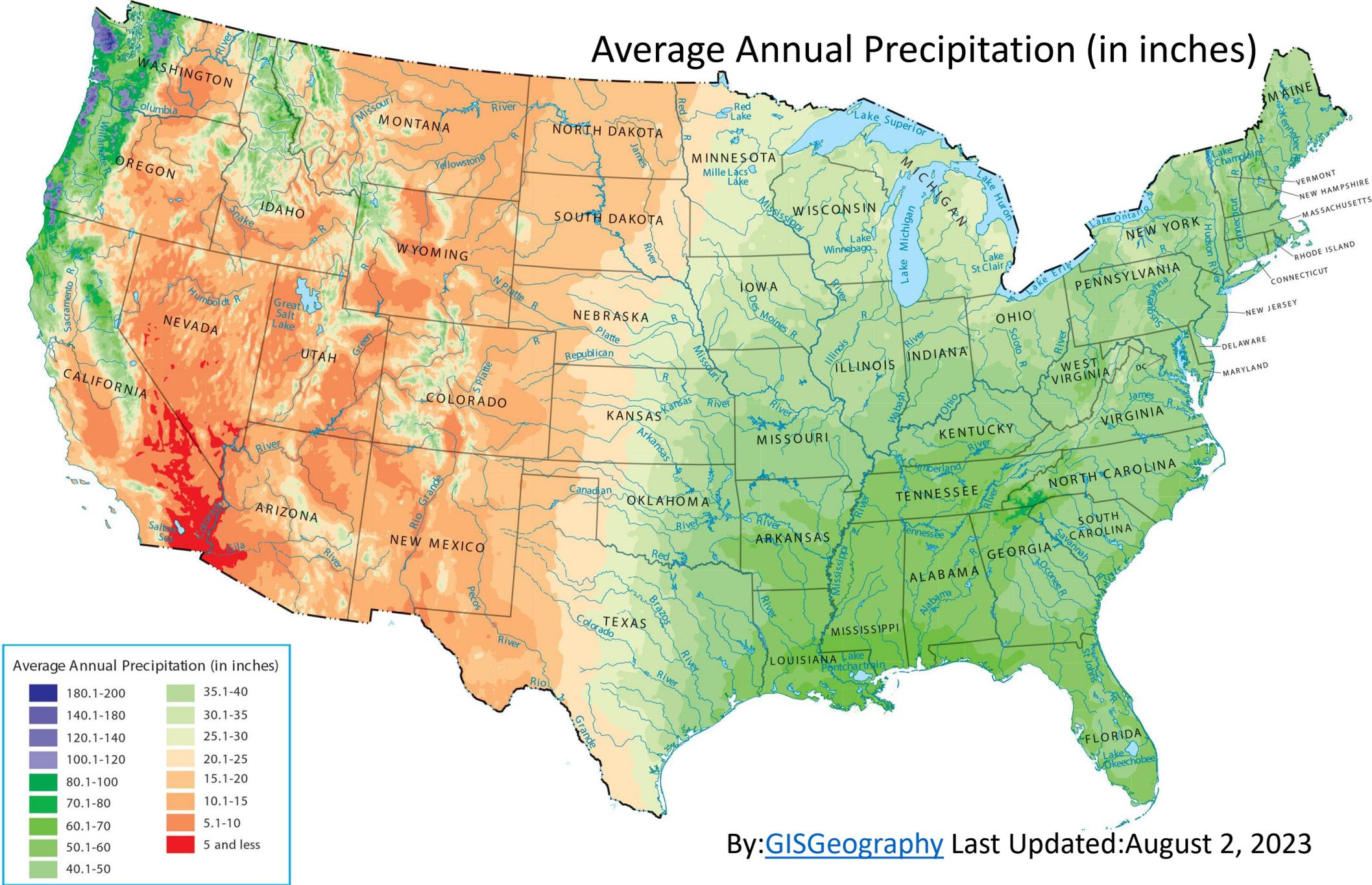
**Precipitation: 5 to 15 in/year**

**Top of the Basin**

**Natural resource based economy (energy, agriculture, timber, mining, recreation)**

**World class wildlife resource**

# Average Annual Precipitation (in inches)



By: [GISGeography](https://www.gisgeography.com/) Last Updated: August 2, 2023

# WYOMING'S WATER USE



87.15%	Irrigation
5.83%	Mining
4.71%	Thermoelectric
2.07%	Public Supply
0.13%	Rural Domestic
0.11%	Industrial

Source: Gov Matthew Mead's Wyoming Water Strategy, 2015



## The Wetlands and Irrigation Connection

- Roughly 90% of irrigation in the upper green is flood
- Wetlands – 2 to 4% of land area, nearly half on private land
- 60 – 70% are created or supported by irrigation
- 2/3 are temporary/seasonal

# Irrigation and Wetlands in Xeric Basins





Ecosystem services of wetlands: flood control, habitat, stream flow maintenance, aquifer recharge, sediment retention, water quality improvement, recreation...

90% of wildlife species in Wyoming depend on wetlands and riparian habitats daily or seasonally during their life cycle –*Nicholoff 2003*



## Meeting the Moment

- Working toward conservation solutions at the basin scale
  - Infrastructure
  - System Conservation Pilot Program
  - Exchanges, etc.
- Landscape implications: not as simple as converting the basin to pivot
- Some places are key to maintaining wetlands, ag resources, wildlife habitat, recreation

# Takeaways

Critical connection  
between landscape  
health and water  
management

Efficiency is a key  
conservation strategy,  
but where and how  
makes a difference

Place Matters

