



BABBITT CENTER
FOR LAND AND WATER POLICY

A Center of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

Who We Are

Photo by Colleen Miniuk

► Building capacity to secure our water future

The sustainability of water and land resources is one of the greatest challenges facing the Colorado River Basin. Since most uses of land require an adequate water supply, meaningfully addressing this challenge requires recognizing how land use decisions shape water demand. This linkage is the cornerstone of the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, a Center at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

OUR MISSION

We advance the integration of land and water management to meet the current and future water needs of Colorado River Basin communities, economies, and the environment.

WHAT WE DO

Real-world understanding, research and training, and collaborative partners who connect resources are valuable catalysts that strengthen the ability of a community to act to secure their water future. Our work is focused throughout the seven Colorado River Basin states, bi-nationally across the Basin into Mexico, and with 30 Native American Tribes, helping communities be more resilient and building an exchange of transformative ideas globally with other arid and semiarid regions.

SPHERES OF FOCUS

Our portfolio of work spans three current spheres of focus, and one future sphere of focus.

GROWING COMMUNITIES

Growing urban areas, suburban, edge, and rural communities alike are confronting unpredictable climate conditions and water availability. They are actively seeking solutions to address an uncertain future. We work with communities to address these complex challenges of population and economic growth by assisting to build community capacity, reach consensus, and implement meaningful policies and practical solutions.

IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

In an era of ambiguous water availability, innovative and collaborative solutions are essential to optimize adaptive irrigated agriculture in the Colorado River Basin. The culture and local economies and the national food supply depend on it. How those solutions take shape and are catalyzed impact not just the West, but the entire United States.

CONTINUED ►

“ The connection between land and water is a three-act play. Climate sets the stage. The Colorado River flows through time, shaping the land and our lives. And now, the third act: generating information and public engagement to support productive agriculture, flourishing communities, and a sustainable environment. ”

– Bruce Babbitt, Former U.S. Secretary of the Interior,
Former Arizona Governor

THE LAND-WATER CONNECTION: CREATING THE BABBITT CENTER

In 2016, leaders of the Lincoln Institute flew over the Colorado River Delta in Mexico. It was obvious from the aerial view that much of the land was devoid of water with zero value to people or the environment, revealing an imperative need to study the intersection of land policy and water policy.

The Babbitt Center fulfills this vision. By studying the intersections of policy and management and the interconnected uses of land and water, we are a seedbed for research, capacity building, and the practical implementation that can—and will—change how the world manages its scarce water resources.

—Katie Lincoln, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Board Chair and Chief Investment Officer

Photo by Colleen Miniuk

“The Babbitt Center provides unique services and products that address the fundamental union of land use and water, and builds consciousness and capacity in local communities to address this connection on their own.”

—Anne Castle, Senior Fellow, Getches-Wilkinson Center, University of Colorado

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The 30 Native American Indian Tribes in the Colorado River Basin hold 15 percent of the land and more than 25 percent of the Colorado River water allocation. However, Tribal communities have historically been excluded from state and Basin-wide water management decisions. The Babbitt Center supports Tribal Nations' efforts to engage in Basin-wide policy decisions to strengthen their capacity to manage their water resources.

FUTURE FOCUS: PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT

Fifty eight percent of the land in the Colorado River Basin is publicly owned, the majority by the federal government, and management of these lands is critical to water quality and water supply. Looking ahead, the Babbitt Center will begin to integrate this important land use into our portfolio of work and concentrate on the connections between public land management and water.

HOW WE WORK

To build capacity across the communities and regions that will shape the future of the Colorado River Basin our focus is a four-pronged approach.

1. RESEARCH

Communities need timely and accurate information and data to address the unique challenges they face to harness opportunities to prepare for an uncertain future. We work with leading researchers across multiple disciplines to generate new insights that illuminate major policy and management challenges at the nexus of land and water. We make new knowledge accessible and relevant to decision-makers and practitioners through myriad publications and trainings.

EXAMPLES:

► Basin Story Maps: Overviews of Conditions and Issues

We dig deep into the details of water in the West to provide visually stunning and succinct information on the issues facing the Basin. With more than 150,000 views, our

flagship story map “The Hardest-working River in the West” and data portal make the science and policy of the Colorado River Basin accessible to a broad audience.

► Policy Focus Report: Integrating Land Use and Water Management, Planning, and Practice

Land without water cannot support communities of any scale, yet many land use decisions are made without regard to water, and vice versa. This report introduces readers to best management practices that enable local governments and water providers to integrate the two systems. Supported by case studies from several U.S. communities, the report demonstrates that planning is a crucial step for land and water integration.

2. RESOURCES

Creating resilience relies on a community having access to appropriate resources—tools, funding, and applicable processes—to implement next steps and transform the conditions and outcomes that matter to them. We provide an array of resource competencies that help communities make effective decisions, galvanize broad-based engagement, employ long-term and comprehensive visioning, and provide access to innovative planning tools.

EXAMPLE:

► Exploratory Scenario Planning

The Babbitt Center, in collaboration with Lincoln Institute's Scenario Planning Team and Arizona State University, conducted an inaugural scenario planning workshop in Mesa County, Colorado, in March 2023. The Babbitt Center recognizes that water availability for agriculture is declining in the Basin. We believe that agricultural communities throughout the West must be engaged in planning for a resilient future not only for agriculture but also for their larger community. Exploratory Scenario Planning (XSP) proved to be a useful approach to engage Mesa County community members and assist them to begin developing and implementing actions to secure their future. Fifty participants worked to develop six alternative futures and

identified more than 44 types of actions their community could pursue. The community is implementing workshop results and has prioritized 13 strategies to start this effort. There will be additional XSP workshops in communities throughout the Basin states.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships link organizations with shared goals and can leverage and bring new resources to the table. The Babbitt Center invests in innovators and collaborates with vested partners from state, local, and Tribal governments, nonprofits, private businesses, academia, and other private foundations. Together, we amplify our collective influence and impact across the Colorado River Basin to connect communities to best practices and valuable resources to advance their work.

EXAMPLE:

► Water & Tribes Initiative

Thirty Native American Indian Tribes in the Colorado River Basin have inhabited

the region for millennia. They depend on the waters of the Colorado River and its tributaries, and are major water rights holders. However, many tribes are unable to access their water rights and have traditionally been excluded from the development of Colorado River Policy. The Water & Tribes Initiative (WTI) was founded in 2017 to address these issues. The goals: facilitate connections among Tribes and other leaders, build trust and understanding, and create opportunities to explore shared interests and take collaborative action.

The Babbitt Center is proud to serve as the founding and managing funder and fiscal agent for the Water & Tribes Initiative (WTI).

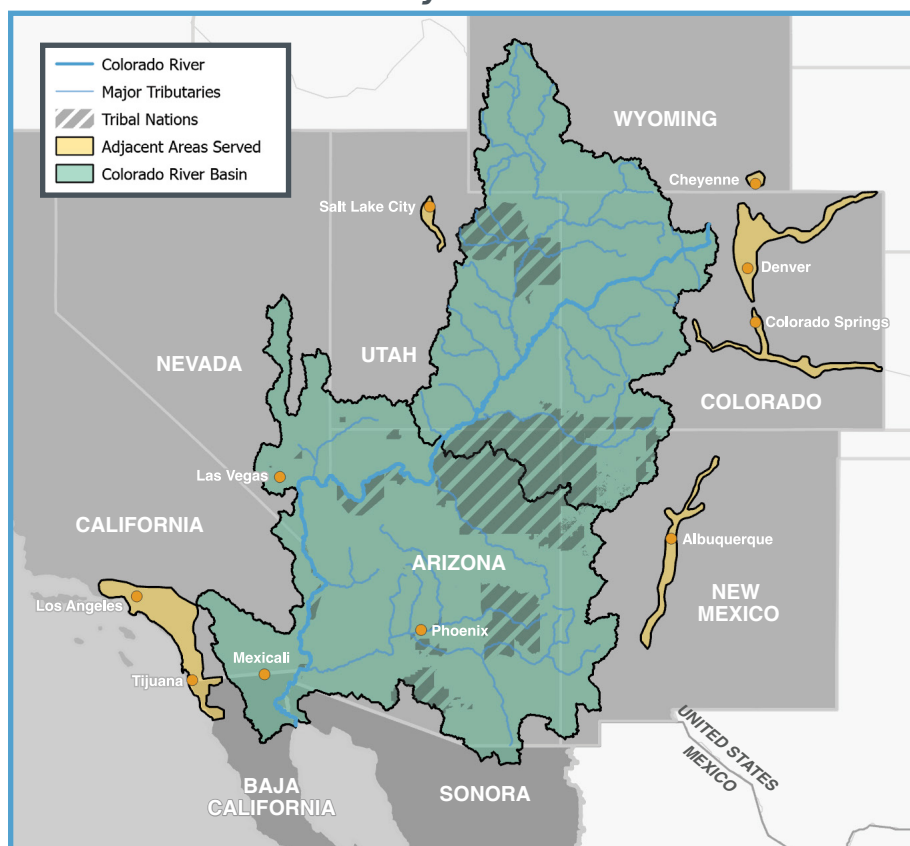
4. EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION

Outreach, education, and training are essential for communities to understand the nuances of the land-water connection and to make and implement decisions that best secure their water future. We conduct trainings, develop and publish guidance, and transfer knowledge to

“ The Babbitt Center is engaging with communities, embracing innovation, and giving growers the tools they need. They’re doing the hard work to build the trust that is the basis for collaboration, which is the only way to move forward on challenging and complex water issues—and that is *together*. ”

– Karen Ross,
Secretary of the California
Department of Food and
Agriculture

Areas Served by the Colorado River



Created by The Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy. Source: Esri, Garmin, FOA, NOAA, USGS, EPA

Collaborate With Us

We build the capacity of communities to effectively manage their land and water resources. We have confidence in the ability of capable communities to shape their future and recognize that a sustainable region is forged from the actions of individual communities throughout the Basin, each working to be resilient. We are making an impact. We are helping to secure our water future.

Photo by Colleen Miniuk

research networks and practitioners. We support the next generation of scholars and practitioners through fellowships, internships, and mentoring opportunities. And we disseminate our work in a variety of mediums.

EXAMPLES:

► Growing Water Smart

These workshops bring key community staff and decision-makers together to collaborate and build a more resilient and sustainable water future for their community. The program uses a range of planning, communication, policy implementation tools, and post-workshop technical assistance to help teams determine and achieve their water efficiency, sustainable growth, watershed health, and resiliency goals. More than 100 towns, cities, and counties in Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and California, and along the U.S.-Mexico border, have participated in Growing Water Smart.

► Cultivating Change Video

Irrigated agriculture in the U.S. Southwest and northwest Mexico faces a future where water supplies will not only be reduced, but also less reliable and more expensive.



The Babbitt Center partnered with Palmer Land Conservancy, The Freshwater Trust, and Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture to share the innovative approaches two communities are utilizing to forge a resilient agricultural community and economy. This video has been viewed thousands of times and provides a real-world perspective into agricultural practices in the Basin.

“ During a recent scenario planning workshop, I was pleased that the facilitation team did not try to impose their own agenda on the process, but instead worked diligently to help the community participants arrive at their own answers and approaches to complex and sometimes emotional problems. ”

– Sean Norris,
Manager, Mesa County
Planning Department

TOP TOOLS IDENTIFIED BY EXPERTS FOR LINKING LAND AND WATER*

TOOLS, PRACTICES, AND PROCESSES	TOOL USEFULNESS FOR ADDRESSING CERTAIN WATER ISSUES			
	WATER ADEQUACY	FLOODING AND CSOs	AGING INFRASTRUCTURE	WATER QUALITY
COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES				
Comprehensive and Master Plans	●	●	●	●
Remove Existing Barriers	●	●	●	●
Public Engagement and Participation	●	○	N/A	●
Coordinated Data and Information	●	●	●	●
Closed Approval Loop Between Land/Water	●	●	N/A	○
Rate Structure/Conservation Rate Structure	●	●	N/A	N/A
Water Resources Plans	●	●	●	●
Developer Incentives	●	●	○	●
Ongoing Communication	●	●	●	●
Connection Charges	●	●	●	N/A
* Complete descriptions for each row and column of this toolbox are described in Integrating Land and Water: Tools, Practices, Processes, and Evaluation Criteria by Erin Rugland, 2021.	KEY ● Highly useful for addressing this water issue ● Useful for addressing this water issue ● Somewhat useful for addressing this water issue ○ Marginally useful for addressing this water issue			