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| Water managers from seven western states came together this week, trying to avoid what could be one the most costly impacts of climate change we’ve seen— a Colorado River that is running out of water.  Time is not on their side, and mother nature is not cooperating.  Brad Hicks reports. | |
|  | Over the past 20 years, the water levels have dropped dramatically:  170 feet on Lake Mead — more than halfway to a disastrous dead pool, when no water at all will flow through Hoover Dam.  And so much on Lake Powell, the Glen Canyon dam may not be able to produce any power by early next year. |
| David Palumbo  Bureau of Reclamation | *We can’t get to those critical elevations.  The functioning of the systems needs to be maintained for the 40 million people that rely on it.* |
|  | In the face of that fear, more than a thousand key players from the Colorado River Water Users Association came together in Las Vegas to share ideas and possible solutions. |
| Aaron Chavez  CRWUA President | *Everyone’s worried at this point.  They know they need to do something about this situation.* |
|  | Less snow from the sky is part of the problem, but the real issue is on the ground.  Warmer temperatures are drying out the soil, so when it rains or the snow melts, it’s soaking into the ground instead of running into the tributaries.  And more of what does run off, is evaporating. |
| David Palumbo  Bureau of Reclamation | *What the scientists are telling me is to be prepared for another abnormally low runoff.* |
|  | But climate isn’t the only cause.  The roots run deep, going back as far as a century when the water was first allocated. |
| Elizabeth Koebele  Water Policy Expert | *We thought we had a lot more water than we actually do have, and we gave rights away to more water then we thought we had.* |
|  | Earlier this year, the Bureau of Reclamation asked the seven states that share Colorado River water to come up with a consensus on how to cut back use by nearly 30 percent.  They completely failed. |
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|  | If the states don’t come up with a solution soon, the federal government will force one on them — a message made loud and clear at the conference. |
| David Palumbo  Bureau of Reclamation | *If we don’t have a consensus alternative, we will have a federal alternative that we will implement.  We’ve got to.*  That federal plan would limit how low the levels at Lake Powell and Lake Mead can get— and that would require drastic cuts in water use.  In Las Vegas, Brad Hicks reporting. |