

Luke Runyon, 2021: KUNC, “Hydropower Worries Grow As Colorado River Reservoirs Keep Dropping”

Luke Runyon is the managing editor and reporter for the Colorado River Basin at KUNC, a Colorado news outlet.

“The water levels behind dams on the Colorado River are fast-approaching record lows. The historic 21-year megadrought will likely lead to higher energy bills because the dams can’t produce as much electricity. The problem is most serious at Lake Powell.

“Inside Lake Powell’s dam, water moves through generators to churn out power for 5 million people in seven Western states: Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. As the lake declines, its power production does too, because there’s less water pressure to drive the turbines. Bob Martin of the Bureau of Reclamation said, ‘The electricity is keeping the lights on at businesses, the AC on at your home, power to the hospitals, you name it. It’s really a backbone of our society now.’

“The reservoir’s level is currently at 3,557 feet above sea level. It’s projected to drop to 3,515 feet by next spring. If it gets down to 3,490 feet, hydropower production at the dam will be impossible. ‘I think it’s been described as a slow-moving train wreck,’ said Eric Kuhn, the former general manager of the Colorado River District. ‘Because it’s taken us 22 years to go from full to where we are.’

“Even with 2021’s historic lows, the Colorado River’s dams are still generating hydropower. What’s uncertain is what another year as dry as this one could do to power production.”

<https://www.kunc.org/environment/2021-07-13/hydropower-worries-grow-as-colorado-river-reservoirs-keep-dropping>

Modified for easier reading.