

Colorado Desert

Human Setting

- Creation of the Salton Sea
 - Prehistoric Lake Cahuilla dries long before Europeans arrive
 - Imperial Valley known as Valley of the Dead by 19th Century travelers
 - Irrigation scheme and name change initiated in 1901
 - Diversion canal and two bypasses silt up by 1904
 - New channel cut without good control gates
 - Early Spring flood washes away gates, full flow of river rushes into Salton Trough
 - Southern Pacific finally manages to close channel in 1907
 - Rapidly shrank until irrigation flows began to recharge in 1920s
- Tapping the Colorado River on Purpose
 - Colorado River Compact
 - Agreement to divide flow between six basin states
 - Approved by Congress 1922
 - Ratified by states in 1928
 - Boulder Dam constructed to control flow of lower river
 - Imperial Dam and All-American Canal completed 1940
 - Coachella Canal completed 1948
- Rich agricultural production
 - Imperial Valley and Palo Verde Valley
 - Truck crops--lettuce, melons
 - Livestock feed and feedlots
 - Coachella Valley

- Dates, grapefruit, grapes
- Recreation and Retirement
 - Palm Springs area
 - Explosion of gated golf course developments
 - Stark contrast to poor agricultural areas to east
 - Colorado River
 - Anza Borrego Desert State Park