

April 24, 2017

Via Email

The Honorable Javan D. Mesnard, Speaker
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: SB 1309; S/E AMENDMENT (Pinal AMA; groundwater; extinguishment credits)

Dear Speaker Mesnard:

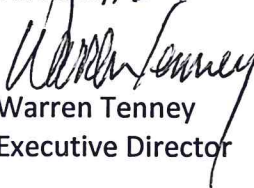
The Arizona Municipal Water Users Association's Board of Directors opposes SB 1309 as amended. The Association - whose members include Avondale, Chandler, Gilbert, Glendale, Goodyear, Mesa, Peoria, Phoenix, Scottsdale and Tempe - actively supports the 1980 Groundwater Management Act and are committed to ensuring increased groundwater mining does not occur. SB 1309 would weaken the Act, including its overarching goal of reducing dependence on groundwater. It would lead to increased withdrawals of groundwater in the Pinal Active Management Area (AMA) to the detriment of the long-term sustainability of that area's water supplies. I am writing to ask that you hold this bill.

The management goal for the Pinal AMA is to allow the development of non-irrigation uses of groundwater **and to preserve existing agricultural economies for as long as feasible**. In recognition of this goal, the Arizona Department of Water Resources by rule allows a person to retire an irrigation grandfathered right to withdraw groundwater and receive an "extinguishment credit" that may be used to pump groundwater for new subdivisions. To preserve groundwater for the remaining agricultural economy, the amount of the credit (1.5 acre-feet per acre) is far less than the amount of the grandfathered right.

SB 1309 would require the Department to grant extinguishment credits for the full amount of the grandfathered right. These credits could then be used to pump groundwater for new subdivisions with no obligation to replenish any of the groundwater that is pumped. This would have a severe impact on remaining agricultural users by depleting groundwater supplies. Moreover, it sets a dangerous precedent of interfering with the goals of the Groundwater Management Act to the detriment of the state.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to hold this bill. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,


Warren Tenney
Executive Director

Arizona Municipal Water Users Association