

Key questions about augmentation

Arizona is always on the outlook for that next bucket of water. Knowing the importance of water in the desert, we often dream of finding new water supplies. This has increased in recent years as we recognize that shortages on the Colorado River will mean less water in the future, hence spurring more conversations about water augmentation and how we can locate that next bucket to enhance our existing water resources.



Augmentation was a key focus of Governor Ducey in his State of the State address when he elevated the desire to secure more water by committing \$1 billion over three years to pursue water augmentation opportunities. He specifically referenced the concept of desalinating ocean water from the Sea of Cortez, which has been considered and explored for decades. Other large importation projects have recently been mentioned, including importing floodwater from the Missouri or Mississippi Rivers.

Finding more water for Arizona appears to be a no-brainer. Yet, augmentation raises a number of questions that need to be considered as we look at options for obtaining more water, including:

- What is the purpose of the new water?
- Is it just to replace the loss of water from Colorado River shortages?
- Is it for new growth or for existing residents? Is there enough for both?
- Is it for agriculture?
- How much water will an augmentation project generate?
- How much water do we actually need?
- Then, there are the questions around funding. Who pays for developing this water?
- And is a new supply of water worth developing, no matter the cost?

Recognizing that augmentation is an increasing focus of state leaders, decision-makers, and the water community, it's vital that we understand that a new bucket of water WILL NOT magically appear, and the reality is that any augmentation project WILL involve a lot of time, hard work, and money. That is why we must continue to wisely manage and conserve our existing water supplies while being thorough in our decision-making process when looking to add any new water into the mix.

For over 50 years, the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, and sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more information, visit www.amwua.org.