

Access to infrastructure funding crucial for water providers in Arizona

Planning for the future is crucial in the water world. That is why water providers look at all elements of their operations, including what would happen if a worst-case scenario arose. Having a backup supply is critically important, brings assurance, and keeps operations running seamlessly. However, having access to a backup supply cannot happen without the proper infrastructure to move the water quickly and where needed.

These are all elements that went into developing a new project in the City of Glendale, which will better ensure water reliability in all areas of the city thanks to regional cooperation with the Cities of Peoria and Phoenix and crucial federal infrastructure funding.



The Interconnect Project for Emergency Flow initially started as an idea five years ago when Glendale Water Services Director, Craig Johnson, studied the city boundaries and analyzed how water flows in all areas. He recognized that water could not be moved from the southern part of Glendale to their northern water plant - Pyramid Peak Plant, which is co-owned with the City of Peoria, in case of an emergency. He reached out to his counterparts in the two neighboring cities, who immediately supported the idea of building interconnects between their cities.

“From the start, when I first proposed this idea, they were on board,” noted Johnson. “The collaboration with our sister cities of Phoenix and Peoria has been phenomenal. I cannot stress that enough.”

The interconnect project will ensure that if a serious event impacted the Pyramid Peak Treatment Plant, a reliable backup supply would now be available from Phoenix or Peoria. While Glendale does have water storage in the northern region, in case of an emergency that extends over 36-48 hours, the interconnects give extra reliability that Glendale can still get water to their residents. Additionally, the system will be set up so if one of the other cities ever had an issue and Glendale could do so, they could send water to their partnering cities through the same system.

Like with all major infrastructure projects, funding is always a challenge, especially when it comes to balancing all the financial commitments and demands placed upon a municipal water provider. Recognizing this project would come with a high cost, Glendale staff took the project to Arizona Senator Mark Kelly about a year ago to see if federal assistance was possible. He was immediately supportive of the project, and to ensure it would receive the proper funding, his

team immediately got working on it. He understood the project's importance and supported it every step through the financing process at the federal level.

Now with the passing of the federal budget, the funding is in place to start construction. To further show his support for the project, Sen. Kelly toured the Glendale Water Oasis Treatment Facility last week, where he emphasized the importance of water in Arizona and infrastructure projects like the Interconnect Project for Emergency Flow.

He noted that being able to connect the water supplies of the three cities is an example of being resilient. "If something was to happen, having the ability to move water from one municipality to another would preserve the water supply for millions of people in Maricopa County."

"Water is the future of Arizona," stated Sen. Kelly. "One of the solutions to the water shortages we are going to face and are facing now is engineering solutions – engineering our way out of a difficult situation. Whether it's desalination, more water storage, or a more efficient way to water crops, these are the steps we need to take. It's not just one thing that will get us out of this historic drought, but projects like this are really going to help."

The Interconnect Project for Emergency Flow highlights the critical role of infrastructure in Arizona, including the importance of having access to the recently-approved federal funding to assist with water infrastructure projects. This is why Senate Bill 1067 should be a priority in this legislative session. It would streamline the statutory process so that all communities in the state would have access to federal infrastructure funds for the next five years. Thus, Arizona could take full advantage of \$600 million of infrastructure funding from the federal government.

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.