

## Collaboratively developing solutions for our water challenges must be a priority

As the new legislative session begins, Governor Hobbs has made water a priority. In her State of the State address, she boldly shined a spotlight on Arizona's water challenges and encouraged legislators and stakeholders to develop solutions. Acknowledging a problem is always the first step to resolving it. AMWUA supports the Governor's efforts to tackle water issues with transparency, knowledge, and urgency.

The creation of a Governor's Water Policy Council that will be led by the Director of Arizona's Department of Water Resources will enable legislators, water managers, municipal water providers, agricultural leaders, and the business community to work together to find much-needed corrections to long-standing and emerging issues. For example:



- Communities and landowners outside the state's Active Management Areas (AMA) have seen wells run dry as competition for groundwater increases.
- Even within AMAs, some homeowners, including those in the Rio Verde area, are running out of water because they lack an assured water supply due to loopholes that allow land to be sold without a sufficient water supply.
- The Groundwater Management Act, while hugely successful in slowing the depletion of groundwater in metropolitan areas, is not robust enough to ensure that the Act's goals can be met.
- New subdivisions have been put on hold in some areas in AMAs because groundwater alone cannot demonstrate a 100-year assured water supply. At the same time, regulatory loopholes allow for apartments, commercial, and industry to be built in the same areas.
- With groundwater being a finite supply and Colorado River water dwindling, large investments will be needed if we want to develop new sustainable water resources and the associated infrastructure.

The public is already well aware of these problems. They cannot be ignored. Modernizing and expanding the Groundwater Management Act and closing loopholes in the Assured Water Supply Program would send a positive message to existing residents and businesses and to those looking to invest in our state that Arizona is addressing its water issues and working to prevent new ones from developing.

In addition to effectively managing our water, Arizona must continue to invest in water supplies and infrastructure. Over the last five decades, the simple principle of “water first, then development” has compelled the ten AMWUA cities to maximize the use of river and recycled water, invest billions of dollars in infrastructure, and find innovative ways to conserve and manage water resources to meet future demands. These investments and compliance with state regulations have better prepared our cities to confront the current situation on the Colorado River and adjust to a future of having less of that water.

Yes, Arizona is facing water challenges, but we also have over a century of experience developing creative solutions that withstand the test of time. Since 1980, the ten AMWUA cities have been required to comply with the 1980 Groundwater Management Act, including providing a 100-year assured water supply for not just subdivisions but all of their customers and complying with mandatory conservation requirements. This has enabled the ten AMWUA cities to collectively meet the water demands of 3.7 million residents and the water needs for the Valley’s thriving high-tech manufacturing, defensive, finance services, health care, higher education institutions, and other services that support regional and national economies. All of this is being done while using roughly the same amount of drinking water as they did in 2000 despite adding one million more residents.

The AMWUA cities understand firsthand the value of acknowledging problems, collaboratively developing solutions to effectively manage and safeguard water supplies, and proactively investing in resources and infrastructure for the future. Utilizing that experience, AMWUA and its members will continue to work with legislators, other municipal water providers, the business community, and the agriculture sector to ensure the long-term water sustainability of our state.

*For over 50 years, 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 water information, visit [www.amwua.org](http://www.amwua.org).*