

Celebrating Arizona's Natural Diversity While Embracing the Challenges of our Arid Climate

Our beloved state recently celebrated its 111th birthday. While challenges come with our desert climate, it's important to pause and appreciate where we live and embrace our state's diversity in landscape and weather.

While a large portion of the state sits at least 4,000 feet above sea level and possesses the world's largest Ponderosa Pine forest, Arizona is well-known for its vast desert and arid climate. About one-tenth of Arizona is forested, one-fourth is woodland, one-fourth is grassland, and the rest is desert. Arizona is the only state that includes a part of the four deserts found in North America - the Sonoran Desert (the largest), Mohave, Great Basin, and the Chihuahuan Desert.



Even though we do live in a desert state, Arizona has more shorelines than expected. Within our borders are manmade lakes (from dams), including [Roosevelt Lake](#), Bartlett Lake, Canyon Lake, Saguaro Lake, Apache Lake, Lake Havasu, and the two largest manmade lakes in the U.S. - Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Arizona also has many creeks and rivers, including the San Pedro River, Gila River, Verde River, Salt River, and the [Colorado River](#) is our state's western border.

All of these characteristics highlight our state's diversity and showcase the challenges of living in Arizona's varied climate and geography, which can yield the highest and lowest temperatures in the country within the same day. Precipitation levels also vary from border to border, but in the desert portions of our state, like here in the Valley, rain averages can be as low as five to eight inches annually, creating obvious challenges.

So it's pretty amazing to think we can thrive in the predominantly arid parts of Arizona, which would not be possible without access to [diverse water supplies such as the Salt and Verde Rivers, Colorado River, and groundwater](#). More importantly, the effective management of those water resources and efficient water use have enabled us to prosper here in the Valley. Managing our water responsibly has increased our resiliency and played a critical role in our long-term planning in the desert.

Additionally, Arizona has had the country's most proactive [groundwater management](#) structure, including mandated conservation in the state's most populated areas for more than 40 years. Our strong water [conservation ethic](#) enables us to prosper and enjoy our vibrant way of life in the desert. We need to continue to do what has enabled us to thrive in the desert -

planning, managing, and investing in our water resources and infrastructure. When we all do our part and are water-smart, our desert communities will remain resilient for generations.

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