

Explaining All Aspects of Water in Arizona Through 500 Blogs

The AMWUA Blog recently hit a significant milestone – our 500th edition. Since 2014, we have aimed to take the mystery out of complex water issues by providing valuable facts, numbers, or statistics from credible sources and through research. Our key objective has been to explain all aspects of what it takes to deliver water to homes and commercial customers and the importance of conservation and water efficiency in our desert communities through a straightforward and understandable approach.



Now, as we look back at the vast array of subject matter we have covered over the years, the top five hottest topics remain consistent and remain key priorities today.

The Colorado River

For almost a decade, we have been writing about the concerning circumstances surrounding the Colorado River.

While we have seen the decline of the Colorado River system evolve quicker than anyone anticipated back then, the AMWUA cities have always kept a watchful eye on this critical water supply and proactively have been preparing for a Colorado River shortage for years, including deeper levels of shortage.

At this time last year, things looked far more bleak, but due to a good snowpack last winter, we were given [a minor reprieve](#). Yet, the Colorado River Basin still suffers from the consequences of over two decades of severe drought, a hotter and drier climate, and the long-term imbalance between supply and demand. While [Mother Nature](#) gave us a rare gift this past year, it cannot be squandered. It provides time for Reclamation and the Basin States to focus on developing the post-2026 long-term operating guidelines to ensure a stable Colorado River system for the 40 million people who rely upon it.

Here in the Valley, the AMWUA cities will [continue to prepare](#) for a future with less Colorado River water. Their planning initiatives include investing in infrastructure, ramping up conservation programs, and exploring water resiliency projects – all of which will help increase our collective sustainability in the desert.

Groundwater Management

The focus on groundwater management came long before our blog but has been a dominant topic because the AMWUA cities understand the importance of protecting this finite resource and consider ways to better manage this precious resource.

Arizona has a proud history of taking proactive and decisive measures to manage groundwater through the [1980 Groundwater Management Act](#) and the [100-year Assured Water Supply Program](#). Safeguarding our groundwater supplies and sustaining our aquifers in the Phoenix AMA and across our state is directly linked to why Arizona has a strong economy. Yet, we cannot rest on our laurels but must continue to grapple with groundwater issues and continue our long legacy of wise water stewardship.

When the [Phoenix AMA Groundwater Model](#) was released earlier this year, it generated much attention and conversation, particularly about pausing development in areas that solely rely on groundwater. This is not because [we have run out of water](#) in Maricopa County but because Arizona requires demonstrating a 100-year supply of water before development. [Development can continue within the AMWUA cities](#) because they have a 100-year Assured Water Supply and do not rely on groundwater. The model reemphasized that Arizona and the AMWUA cities understand the importance of living within our means and growing sensibly so communities can be resilient and not rely solely on a finite resource.

The focus on groundwater is why the Governor gathered various water stakeholders, including AMWUA, around a table as the [Governor's Water Policy Council](#). They were tasked with [two objectives](#) – improving the Assured Water Supply Program and addressing rural groundwater – which are large tasks for the Governor's Water Policy Council. Failing to safeguard our groundwater supplies is not an option since all water users, communities, and economies will be negatively impacted. [Finding solutions](#) that sustain our aquifers will benefit all of us and continue our legacy of wise water stewardship. Within just six months, the Water Council was able to develop and make five significant recommendations to the Governor for improving the oversight of rural groundwater pumping and for making changes to the Assured Water Supply Program to address the challenges revealed by the Phoenix AMA Groundwater modeling projections.

Investing in Water and Infrastructure

Our cities' [infrastructure](#) is vital to making our daily lives function smoothly. Water systems are the most fundamental of all infrastructure types by delivering safe and clean water to households, industries, and businesses. Millions of gallons of treated water move through miles of pipes buried deep under our feet daily. The water circulates through treatment plants, tanks, pumps, and miles of service lines that deliver water to our water meters and into our homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses 24/7, 365 days a year, with little interruption. This would not be possible without continued

investment in both our water supplies and the vast infrastructure required to deliver and treat it.

Maintaining aging and expansive water distribution and collection systems is an ongoing and growing expense for your city and is a significant component of your city's water rates. Your city water professionals are continually fine-tuning their overall plan and funding for the timely replacement of critical infrastructure so that expensive emergency repairs and customer service disruption are avoided as often as possible. Recognizing the importance of improving and upgrading water systems, the Federal Government passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Water Resources Development Act, and funding for drought resiliency in the Inflation Reduction Act. This has provided [additional funding for critical infrastructure](#) in Arizona and the West, which must remain a priority.

Diverse Water Supplies

Decades ago, Valley water managers recognized the need to decrease dependency on groundwater. Since then, the AMWUA cities have invested in [multiple sources of supply](#) rather than relying on just one, like many areas across the country.

Each of the AMWUA cities have diverse and robust water supplies, including [Colorado River water](#), [Salt and Verde River water](#), [reclaimed water](#), and [groundwater](#). By having multiple sources of supply, the cities are better prepared for the long-term and any short-term challenges that may arise.

However, the work to further expand their portfolios is not done, especially knowing less water is being produced by the Colorado River. [Maximizing water recycling](#) is at the top of the list for water managers to bolster our water supplies with an optimal near-term solution. It is one way our communities can be sustainable now and into the future. Ultimately, utilizing our [recycled water](#) to its full potential is a critical water augmentation strategy – it provides a safe, locally controlled, drought-proof water supply that can be available far sooner than other water importation options.

The [State made an important investment](#) in future and existing water supplies by committing \$1.4 billion to developing new long-term water supplies and water conservation through the restructure of the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority. This was an important first step. Continual investment in long-term water supplies is imperative for Arizona's future to be successful.

Conservation

In Arizona, we understand the [importance of water conservation](#). That's why developing a wide array of programs and resources that are easily accessible to residents and businesses remains a priority for water conservation staff from the ten AMWUA cities because focusing on wise water use never stops.

This culture of using water wisely results from over [40 years of working together](#) to build shared conservation resources and programs tailored specifically to assist residents and commercial customers with the tools and knowledge to be efficient with water use, indoors and out. This is why conservation has been an increasingly important topic for decades and will continue to be as cities look to maximize the use of our water supplies, [inside your home](#) and [especially outdoors](#).

The AMWUA communities have professional conservation staff dedicated to assisting residents and businesses in efficiently using water. Take a moment to visit your [local water conservation office](#) to explore the resources available to you. Plenty of valuable information on our website highlights [what you can do](#) to become more water-wise.

Moving forward, we will continue our mission to educate, inform and inspire action. After all, we all play a part in our sustainability here in the desert. So we hope you keep reading because there will always be plenty to discuss when it comes to water.

Please note that [all 500 blogs](#) are hosted on our website and can be searched by topic or keyword; we encourage you to explore the wide range of info available at your fingertips.

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 water information, visit www.amwua.org.