

Southern Arizona Water Users Association



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SAWUA is a voluntary nonprofit association organized in 1999 to discuss, analyze, and recommend ways to preserve and enhance the quality and quantity of Southern Arizona's water resources.

Avra Water Co-Op

BKW Farms

Community Water Company of Green Valley

Farmers Investment Company

FICO/ Farmers Water Co

Flowing Wells Irrigation District

Green Valley Water Improvement District

Kai Farms

Marana Water Department

Metro Water District

Oro Valley Water Utility

Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department

Red Rock Utilities

Sahuarita Water Company

Sahuarita Wastewater Utility

Tucson Water

No Declaration of Water Shortage for 2016

For the Southern Arizona Water Users Association (SAWUA), the new year begins with a positive note, as the U.S. Department of Interior did not declare a shortage on the Colorado River for 2016. Based on the proactive measures of the Central Arizona Project (CAP) to keep water in Lake Mead and with the cooperation of Mother Nature last May, it is projected that Lake Mead will be 1,082 feet above sea level. While their current status is certainly positive, there is still a probability of a shortage declaration in 2017 or 2018, creating the need to remain vigilant towards water management practices.

Due to the long-term vision of Arizona policymakers, Arizona has avoided the water crisis that is occurring in California. In fact, Arizona is well-recognized for developing, executing and maintaining water management policies and practices to manage limited water resources. However, Arizona is at a critical juncture for our political willingness to continue planning and investing in critical infrastructure, which will determine how well we succeed as a state in the future.

Arizona Town Hall Report

The Arizona Town Hall held its 107th meeting in November of 2015, with the focus of the meeting on Arizona water policy. This is the sixth time a Town Hall has been convened to address the importance of water management for Arizona's future.

The three-day meeting identified a number of actions needed to positively impact Arizona's present and future water needs in order ensure the security and sufficiency of Arizona's water supply. The top six priorities identified were to move forward the Arizona's Strategic Vision for Water Supply Sustainability; create and fund mechanisms to finance water supply and new infrastructure; adequately fund the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) so it can carry out its statutory responsibilities; educate and create public awareness; conservation and augmentation of current water supplies; and, resolution of the general stream adjudication process.

SAWUA agrees with the recommendations from the 107th Arizona Town Hall. Specifically, SAWUA continues to support a stable and adequate funding for ADWR. Specifically, the agency needs adequate resources to recruit and retain skilled, knowledgeable professionals to carry out obligations and proactively concentrate on statewide water management policy.

As SAWUA members participated in the Town Hall, SAWUA encourages all interested parties to review the Arizona Town Hall report, which can be found at www.aztownhall.org.

SAWUA Partners with Bureau of Reclamation on Basin Study

This summer, SAWUA received a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to study water supply and demand imbalances in the Lower Santa Cruz River Basin. Reclamation will provide \$392,750 to be matched by SAWUA and its study partners with local in-kind contributions. The basin study will identify the water resources needed to mitigate climate change impacts and improve water reliability for municipal, agricultural and environmental demands.

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Basin Study (continued)

Study partners include ADWR, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, Cortaro-Marana Irrigation District, Pima Association of Governments, and the University of Arizona.

In announcing the grant, Commissioner Estavan López said, “Working collaboratively with stakeholders within each respective basin, we can use the latest science and data to develop options that will achieve a sustainable water supply.”

SAWUA’s proposal was one of two basin studies selected; the other, the Salinas and Carmel River Basins Study, is in California. The SAWUA Study will start in January 2016 and take three years to complete. The total estimated study cost is \$785,750.

Reclamation’s Basin Study Program is part of the WaterSMART Program, the U.S. Department of Interior’s sustainable water initiative that uses best available science to improve water conservation and help water resource managers identify strategies to narrow the gap between supply and demand.

Arizona’s Strategic Water Vision

On October 5th, Governor Ducey announced his Administration’s water initiative for Arizona. The two-track initiative, has roots from work previously published in the 2014 Strategic Vision for Water Supply Sustainability Report.

The first track creates the Water Augmentation Council, appointed by the Governor, to investigate, among other tasks, the long-term augmentation strategies identified for the 22 planning areas. Warren Tenney, was appointed to the Council, representing SAWUA.

The second is to identify and prioritize the 22 planning areas

specified in the report, starting with rural areas. SAWUA has been a long-time advocate for the implementation of Arizona’s Strategic Water Vision. The 2014 report can be viewed at www.azwater.gov/AzDWR/arizonas_strategic_vision.

Water Supply Development Revolving Fund

The Water Supply Development Revolving Fund was established by Laws 2007, Chapter 226. The fund was created to provide financial assistance to construct water supply projects to water providers in Arizona, particularly in rural areas, lacking sufficient water supplies to meet their long term demands. However, the fund has never been funded. In FY 2015, a one-time appropriation from the General Fund of \$1,000,000 was included, which was later repealed in FY 2016.

This fund was located within the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA). As supported in the Arizona Town Hall report, SAWUA believes that the fund needs financial resources in order for WIFA to meet its statutory obligations.

Preview of Water Legislation for 2016

The 2016 legislative session begins on Monday, January 11, 2016. During the interim period, several legislative proposals have been vetted through the ADWR Rump Water Group and we anticipate the following measures to be introduced.

First, Walton International, a development company, is pursuing legislation that will create an incentive for landowners to allow their agricultural land to be fallow for extended periods of time when circumstances warrant such action.

The concept is to allow the tax policy to encourage conservation

by allowing lands to remain fallow for extended period of times without jeopardizing the agricultural tax status of the property.

Furthermore, it would exempt an irrigation grandfathered right in the Pinal AMA that has not been exercised for five consecutive years and is appurtenant to property that qualifies for agricultural property tax classification.

Separately, Sierra Vista is looking to bring forth legislation that would prevent a final plat from approval, unless the municipality has adopted an ordinance that requires ADWR to ensure that there is an adequate water supply for a subdivision located outside of an AMA and within that municipality.

Other likely legislation include an extension of the Buckeye Water Logged Area and codification of the San Carlos court decision.

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