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Against Establishing Hualapai Basin INA

1 message

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To: sscantlebury@azwater.gov

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When it comes to water resources, I want to be cautious and concerned. As a property right advocate, the last thing I want to do is take away anyone's rights.

Establishing an Irrigation Non-Expansion Area (INA) for the Hualapai Basin would primarily stop the little guy from enjoying their own water rights – and have no effect on the existing dilemma created in the last 12 years. The large farming corporations will determine if it is going to be profitable or not – if they will be successful or not. If not, they are going to move along somewhere else. If a well does go dry, they will lose their crop – as they can't replace a well in time to save a crop. On top of that, drilling an additional well or drilling a well deeper at some point becomes cost prohibitive.

But the little guy, the one that bought 5 acres or 40 acres to create a homestead and have their small farm for their own sustainability – this INA would affect them. They would not be able to drill a well and irrigate beyond 2 acres. That takes away their right to a homestead and their small farm. This affects the little guy – not the big guy.

Water conservation is a hot topic in many venues – and much of it is just “talk”. If the County put more effort into conserving water and initiating water conservation programs, it would have much more value to the long-term sustainability of the Hualapai Basin. Increasing recharge entry points in practical areas should have been a high priority within Mohave County years ago.

Beginning in 2009, developers were looking at expanding residential development into the County area. Discussions transitioned into developing mini-Ranches for tax write offs. By 2012, some of these developers were buying up large amounts of vacant lands for farming – nuts, alfalfa, vegetables, cotton, and so forth. There was speculation between 2012 and 2014 that these large purchases were tied to future residential development and using the pretense of “irrigation wells” to install water systems that could be converted to support the future housing growth of the area.

In the meantime, more than 10 years have passed, and many more irrigation wells have been approved, drilled and equipped – increasing the potential stress on the existing water resources. All of these wells are now grandfathered in under the establishment of an INA. While some farms have determined that farming in the desert is cost-prohibited and not sustainable from the depths required to access water from the Hualapai Basin, other farms are using next generation technologies – much more efficient and water saving than a general housing development. If these lands slated for farm use goes away, it opens the doorway to more water usage by subdivisions and residential development. At least the farmlands (along with open range grazing, washes and non-development farmlands) serve as an area that supports more water conservation than those original plans by developers (and those that will come in a sweep up the lands for future development).

In 2021, the USGS completed and released a 3-year study that took into account all the permitted wells, including the new large irrigation wells – and found there to be no current issue (or perceived issue in the next 175 years) for water resources in the Hualapai Basin.

It has been brought to my attention that an incomplete dataset was used in the modeling due to a so-called “lack of communication” between the farms and the County. As a result, I have been told that some extremely high irrigation numbers were used in place of actual numbers to estimate water usage. Without the proper input values into the model, the output numbers are erroneous.

I do not support establishing an Irrigation Non-Expansion Area.

Regards,
Amanda Kaufman



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