

# Governor's Water Augmentation, Innovation and Conservation Council Post-2025 AMAs Committee October 10, 2019 Meeting Summary

**Time: 2:00pm – 4:00pm**

**Location: Arizona Department of Water Resources**

## *I. Welcome and Introductions*

The following Committee members, GWAICC members or their designees, and stakeholders were present and introduced themselves during the course of the meeting: Warren Tenney, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association; Tim Thomure, Tucson Water; Sarah Porter, Kyl Center; Pam Muse (for Lisa Atkins), Arizona State Land Department; Kevin Rogers, Arizona Cotton Growers; Terri Sue Rossi (for Bill Garfield), Arizona Water Company; Simone Kjolsrud (for Virginia O'Connell), Arizona Water Banking Authority; Chris Udall, Agri-Business and Water Council; John Kmiec, Tucson Water; Paul Hirt, Board of Directors, SRP; Kate Curren, Citizen Water Advisory Group Arizona; John Munderloh, Prescott Valley; Leslie Graser, City of Prescott; Larry Robertson, Attorney; David Snider, Pinal AMA Groundwater Users Advisory Council; Javier Setovich, City of Goodyear; Eric Braun, Town of Gilbert; Cynthia Campbell, City of Phoenix; and, Haley Paul, Audubon Society. Attending from the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) were Clint Chandler, Einav Henenson, David McKay, Kelly Brown, Carol Ward, Bret Esslin, Zack Richards, and Cyndi Ruehl.

## *II. Committee Overview*

Committee Co-Chair Warren Tenney began the meeting with a reflection of the importance of water in Arizona since the passage of the Groundwater Management Act in 1980. Mr. Tenney said he believes the goal of the Act, as stated in [Arizona Revised Statute 45-401](#), drives the purpose of the Post-2025 Active Management Areas (AMAs) Committee today:

*"To protect and stabilize the general economy and welfare of this state and its citizens, it is necessary to conserve, protect and allocate the use of the groundwater resources of the State and to provide a framework for comprehensive management and regulation to use groundwater in this State."*

The goal of the committee is to identify water management challenges facing the AMAs and generate strategic solutions for 2025 and beyond. The approach involves 1) reflecting on the past 40 years of water management in the AMAs while identifying today's problems and challenges and, 2) propose solutions and strategies for addressing the challenges after 2025. To accomplish this task, the committee will compile a list of challenges, categorize those challenges, and refine them. This will be followed by an analysis and deep dive into the priority issues. Lastly, the committee will present its findings to the Council for review. The target date for the presentation to Council is December 2020. In 2021, work will begin to develop solutions and strategies to address the priority issues.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Management Plans, as well as Non-AMA Groundwater issues, are outside the scope of this committee, as there are separate processes for each of those topics.

Representatives from across all five AMAs, industries, and elected officials who can commit to an intensive process are encouraged to participate in the committee.

## *III. Discussion of Successes in the AMAs*

ADWR's Deputy Assistant Director for Planning and Permitting, Carol Ward, presented on the water supply challenges Arizona faced in 1980, the strategies implemented to address those

challenges, how those strategies evolved, and some of the impacts and benefits that those strategies have brought us over the past 40 years. Her presentation can be found on the [Post-2025 AMAs Committee meeting webpage on the ADWR website](#).

Natalie Mast, ADWR's AMA Management Plan Manager, presented information on how Arizona's water management policies are reflected in the data, exploring differences inside and outside the AMAs and across the AMAs. She presented data on AMA population growth, which climbed until the recession in 2008, and AMA groundwater use, which has remained relatively flat since 1991. When comparing the past twenty-five years of water demands across all four sectors between the Tucson AMA and the Prescott AMA, Tucson's demands had been flat while Prescott's demands shifted from mostly agricultural to mostly municipal. Having access to Colorado River water, the Tucson AMA was able to decrease its groundwater use and is considered to be at or near safe yield.

The Prescott AMA, on the other hand, due to inflow patterns and lack of imported supplies, has not achieved safe-yield. However, investment in reclaimed water projects and conservation has kept its groundwater use relatively flat despite its rapid population growth.

Paul Hirt expressed an interest in discovering how much of the progress in water conservation can be attributed to the conversion of agricultural to municipal uses and how much can be attributed to reducing per-capita water use.

Eric Braun recommended documenting reductions in water use/increasing efficiency in water use for the different water users: municipal GPCD, turf AF/acre, agricultural AF/acre. There would be value in sharing their stories of improvement since the Groundwater Management Code was enacted. Mr. Braun pointed out that it is important to recognize that Arizona's reduction in water use isn't strictly a function of urbanizing agricultural lands. He noted that is also due to efforts to drive efficiency and conservation.

Co-Chair Tenney pointed out that it may be appropriate to acknowledge shortcomings in the collection, processing, and housing of data. Mr. Tenney also noted the significance of the Act in terms of providing consumer protections.

#### *IV. Identification of Challenges – Where and How Can We Do Better?*

Kate Curren requested that the committee discuss the effect of excluding wells that pump less than 30 gallons per minute, as 36,000 residents in the Prescott AMA are dependent on wells for their water supply, and some of these wells are being affected as new development lowers the water table.

John Munderloh and Leslie Graser both commented on the need to discuss water augmentation for Arizona.

David Snider expressed strong interest in exploring efficiencies in not just of water use, but also in certificates and analyses of assured and adequate water supply.

Leslie Graser encouraged the committee to re-visit the Assured and Adequate Water Supply (AAWS) rules and how they can work better with existing and future statutes. Further, he proposed the committee look toward integrative management that works with a particular area's strengths to accomplish aquifer water balances and utilize scientific methods to improve our understanding of aquifer storage.

Javier Setovich suggested the committee consider how realistic the concept of safe yield is and review what the committee's goals should be and how we should achieve them.

Pam Muse stressed the importance of the AMAs' ability to respond quickly to water resource situations, adjusting water supply portfolios, and using data to identify successes and failures of various programs.

Cynthia Campbell suggested the committee consider reviewing the exemptions that were provided to certain sectors, exempting them from numerically reporting water use, efficiency, or conservation, as these exemptions may hinder reaching safe yield.

Eric Braun offered the idea of evaluating safe yield between industry types, stating that an AMA may be more effective in meeting its goals if the individual sectors are more effective.

Co-chair Tim Thomure suggested revisiting the conversations and ideas from the Governor's Plenary Group.

Larry Robertson advised addressing staffing challenges within the Arizona Department of Water Resources to obtain the support necessary to meet the goals of the committee.

Paul Hirt pointed out that a significant part of Arizona's success in meeting its goals has been the availability of CAP water. In light of this, he recommended integrating the discussion of groundwater management with surface water supplies and the risk to the CAP supplies. He also recommended that the committee have discussions in the future on restricting CAGR enrollment and embracing demand management strategies.

Terri Sue Rossi stated that regional tools—like the CAGR and the Water Bank and regional models—should be used properly, for regional purposes, within the regulatory structure, not for specific local solutions.

Sarah Porter pointed out that the five management plans were intended to develop increased discipline over time in order to achieve a balance between demand and the supplies that we have. She urged the committee to focus on how to continue that balancing process. She asked the committee to consider: How can we have more discipline across sectors? How can we have better data? What are the missed opportunities? What can we do to be even better over the next four to five management plans?

Haley Paul requested a future discussion on groundwater recharge in streams and rivers to benefit both the environment and utilities within the AMAs.

Co-Chair Tenney added that it might be advisable to focus strategically on managing and protecting specific aquifers within AMAs.

#### *V. Next Steps & Next Meeting Date*

The next committee meeting will be held December 9, 2019, from 2 p.m.-4 p.m. at the Arizona Department of Water Resources.