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## AMA MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

### ISSUE STATEMENT

There is no statutory provision establishing Active Management Area (AMA) goals or additional management periods and plans after 2025. The fifth management plans will remain in effect until statutory changes designate otherwise.

### ISSUE DESCRIPTION

The 1980 Groundwater Management Act established Active Management Areas (AMAs), which are geographic areas where groundwater overdraft was the most severe or where significant groundwater overdraft was likely to occur in the near future (Prescott AMA). Under the Act, management goals are established for each AMA, and a series of management plans must be developed for each AMA that include mandatory conservation programs designed to reduce withdrawals of groundwater.<sup>1</sup>

The Director of ADWR is required by statute to develop a management plan for each AMA for each of five management periods, spanning the years 1980 through 2025. The management plans are designed to assist each AMA in achieving its management goal. The management plans contain conservation programs for agricultural, municipal, and industrial groundwater users as well as the Water Management Assistance Program and information about enforcement provisions. Management periods also tie into the Assured Water Supply Program, with factors related to groundwater allowances and extinguishment credits decreasing over successive management periods.

The fifth and final management period is from 2020 to 2025. The management plans that will be developed for this period remain effective thereafter "until the legislature determines otherwise."<sup>2</sup> There are no statutory provisions for management periods beyond 2025 nor for additional management plans. Additionally, the Phoenix, Prescott, and Tucson AMAs' safe-yield management goal is tied to achievement by 2025, while the statutes are silent on the management goals in those AMAs after that time. This leaves the State with limited ability to adapt, build upon, and revise groundwater management plans and strategies in the AMAs as needed due to projected population growth, ongoing drought, a drier, warmer climate, and anticipated Colorado River shortages, among other factors.

The Post-2025 AMAs Committee has identified several complex issues that present an opportunity to strengthen and improve water management in the AMAs well beyond 2025. These issues relate to unreplenished groundwater withdrawals, exempt wells, the hydrologic disconnect between recharge and recovery, the CAGR, and the Assured Water Supply Program. The management plans have been a foundation for developing tools and strategies that would improve water management and conservation strategies. In order to provide certainty and more effectively plan and manage water supplies in the AMAs in the future, it is critical to clarify whether the AMA management goals, the 10-year management period cycle, and the management plans themselves are appropriate and should be carried forward after 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> A.R.S. § 45-563(A)

<sup>2</sup> A.R.S. § 45-568(C)