

AMA MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

DRAFT

ISSUE STATEMENT

There is no clear statutory provision regarding 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 with heavy reliance on groundwater. Under the Act, goals are established for each AMA, and a series of management plans must be developed for each AMA, including mandatory conservation programs designed to reduce withdrawals of groundwater.

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 Assured Water Supply, 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,”¹ but there are no statutory provisions for management periods beyond 2025 or for additional management plans. Additionally, the Phoenix, Prescott, and Tucson AMAs’ safe-yield management goal is tied to 2025, and the statutes are silent on the management goals in those AMAs after that time. This leaves the State with limited ability to continually adapt and revise groundwater management plans and strategies in the AMAs as the State faces continued challenges in the AMAs 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 issues that present an opportunity to strengthen and improve water management in the AMAs well beyond 2025. These issues include

¹ A.R.S. § 45-568(C)

unreplenished groundwater withdrawals, exempt wells, the hydrologic disconnect among recharge and recovery, and the CAGR and the Assured Water Supply Program. The management plans have been a foundation for developing strategies for implementing measures that would improve water management. In order to provide certainty and more effectively plan and manage 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 in the future.

DRAFT