

Groundwater model does not mean we are running out of water despite the headlines

Despite the impression given by some stories in the national media, the ten AMWUA cities have diverse water portfolios and can meet the demands of their residents and businesses not just for today but for the next 100 years. No other municipalities in the United States are required to meet that standard of an assured water supply and therefore provide that same level of certainty to their residents.



Based on the recently released Phoenix Active Management Area (AMA) Groundwater Model findings, the Arizona Department of Water Resources has determined that a new subdivision in Maricopa County that solely relies on groundwater cannot develop unless it utilizes other water sources. This strict requirement reinforces Arizona's long-standing position that sufficient water supplies must be available before development can occur. This high standard of consumer protection has assured homebuyers and businesses that they can invest and prosper here in our desert communities.

While the findings of the groundwater model are serious, it certainly does not mean that the Valley's economy cannot continue to expand and thrive, as some media reports have implied. Development can continue in places with sufficient supplies, including within the AMWUA cities. The ten AMWUA municipalities, who collectively provide water to 3.7 million residents (half of Arizona's population), each have a 100-year assured water supply designation from the state, which means they have demonstrated they can meet the water demands of their communities, including projected growth over the next 100 years. The AMWUA cities have secured this designation because they have diverse water portfolios and are not solely dependent on groundwater.

The release of the model should be viewed positively because it clarifies the nature of our groundwater challenges and provides an opportunity to resolve them. It is unfortunate that some national media stories have not recognized that Arizona is better positioned by acknowledging the groundwater challenges facing the Phoenix AMA over the next 100 years and not ignoring the fact that groundwater supplies are finite.

Necessity begets innovation, and Arizona is already pursuing solutions. The Governor has initiated her Water Policy Council, comprised of state water leaders, to look at and address groundwater challenges that exist both in our rural and urban areas. The state charged the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) with investing in long-term water augmentation opportunities, rural infrastructure projects, and funding water conservation projects throughout Arizona.

The AMWUA cities take the huge responsibility of providing water in the desert seriously and understand the challenges facing aquifers in Maricopa County and the worsening conditions on the Colorado River. Failure to provide water to their communities is not, and never will be, an option. They continue to adapt and build upon their long history of wise water management by proactively planning and investing in a sustainable water future. To that end, the AMWUA cities are currently pursuing advanced water purification systems to further stretch their water supplies, participating in the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Salt River Project's study to expand Bartlett Dam, and continually enhancing their conservation programs to increase efficiencies.

Although the projections are not as dire as some have portrayed them to be, the groundwater model is another example of Arizona facing the reality of its water challenges head-on. Unlike communities that must deal with the sudden aftermath of a tornado, earthquake, or hurricane, we are fortunate to have the time and fortitude to confront our water challenges by preparing and investing in water resources and infrastructure. The AMWUA cities are committed to doing what is necessary to wisely use this time so that they can continue to thrive here in the desert.

For over 50 years, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, and sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more water information, visit www.amwua.org.