

Multiple Water Sources Bring Resiliency for 3.7 Million People in the AMWUA Cities

We can live in the middle of the desert because we continually plan and invest to ensure safe, reliable, and sustainable water supplies for today and the future. By investing in and protecting their rights to diverse water sources, the ten AMWUA cities are better prepared for the long-term and any short-term challenges that may arise, such as a shortage that impacts one of those sources.

While many people may find it surprising that we have multiple water sources here in our arid state, having diverse water supplies better ensures resiliency in our desert communities. Those water sources include:



Colorado River Water

- The [Central Arizona Project \(CAP\)](#) operates a 336-mile canal system that brings Colorado River water to central and southern Arizona, where 80 percent of the state's population resides.
- With 14 pumping plants, CAP lifts the Colorado River from Lake Havasu, which is at sea level, to an elevation of 2,800 feet at the end of the canal in Tucson.
- The Colorado River system is reaping the benefits of last winter's above-average snowfall. In addition, several AMWUA cities and other Colorado River users committed to leaving water in Lake Mead to add to the favorable hydrology and keep the elevation well above critical operational levels. This has helped ensure the Colorado River system is not as dire as we returned to a [Tier 1 Shortage for 2024](#).
- While this year's runoff brought this reprieve, the AMWUA cities recognize that the Colorado River Basin is under stress from more than two decades of severe drought, a hotter and drier climate, and the long-term imbalance between supply and demand. All of this contributes to a river that is producing historically less water.

Salt and Verde River Water

- The [Salt River Project \(SRP\)](#) operates eight dams, seven reservoirs, and 131 miles of canals that bring water from the [Salt and Verde Rivers](#) to the Valley.
- The Salt and Verde rivers flow into Roosevelt Lake behind Roosevelt Dam, the largest reservoir in SRP's system, and can hold 1.6 million acre-feet, or enough to meet SRP contracts for two years.
- Reservoir water can be blended with groundwater and Colorado River water to meet the region's overall needs. This redundancy in supply enhances water reliability.
- As the climate continues to change, research shows the Verde River watershed will experience dryer dry periods and wetter wet periods. To find a long-term solution, SRP is working on increasing the storage capacity for the Verde River reservoir system over the next decade. A group of 23 partners, including the AMWUA cities, other municipalities, tribal, and agricultural, have committed to support the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's feasibility study of options to [modify Bartlett Dam](#).

Recycled Water

- This is a renewable water source and is also often referenced as [reclaimed water](#).
- All AMWUA cities have been maximizing the use of recycled water for decades by putting the vast majority to beneficial use. It is used for energy production, creating riparian habitats, irrigating sports fields, golf courses, non-edible crops, and commercial landscapes.
- The cities also use recycled water for recharging aquifers by [storing water underground](#), making it available for use when needed.
- Many water providers are assessing [Advanced Water Purification \(AWP\)](#) as a way to maximize their water even further, which is a great thing for Arizona as we collectively develop a significant and attainable solution for our water challenges.

Groundwater

- The AMWUA cities understand the importance of [preserving groundwater](#) and have been stalwart supporters of the 1980 Groundwater Management Act (GMA).
- Groundwater remains the ultimate backup for extended drought and water shortages.
- Safeguarding our finite groundwater supplies and sustaining our aquifers in the Phoenix AMA has provided a strong foundation for our desert communities to develop economically. We must continue to manage and protect this nonrenewable supply to ensure our communities can continue to thrive for decades.

As we plan for a drier future, the AMWUA cities will continue wise water stewardship by investing in, protecting, and enhancing our water supplies, which will ensure viability in the future. In the end, having more than one water source means a more robust economy for the Valley and a more sustainable way of life for all of us here in the desert.

For 55 years, the 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.