

Arizona's Water Position

Updated January 30, 2024

Fast Facts

- Water is a precious resource in Arizona and stewardship has been a priority since before statehood.
- Arizona uses roughly the same amount of water today as it did in the 1950s despite a 7x increase in population and 15x economic increase.
 - Water demand is more dependent on land use than population growth.
 - Today, even with massive population growth and advanced industries expanding to Greater Phoenix, increased conservation methods and reduced agriculture demand has enabled the state to remain below its 1957 water usage levels.
- Greater Phoenix and Arizona have four main water sources: groundwater, Colorado River water, Salt & Verde River water, and reclaimed water.
 - Arizona's water portfolio is 41% groundwater, 36% Colorado River, 18% Salt and Verde Rivers and 5% reclaimed.
 - Greater Phoenix is less reliant on the Colorado River and utilizes more reclaimed water than the state as a whole with 34% groundwater, 29% Colorado River, 25% Salt and Verde Rivers, and 12% reclaimed.
- Arizona was the first state to plan for a 100-year water future by passing the 1980 Groundwater Management Act, which established the legal and physical infrastructure to assure a 100-year water supply in active management areas (AMAs).
- We are leaders in water reuse, with more than 89% of water entering the Greater Phoenix waste stream being reclaimed and reused for parks, schools, golf courses, and other uses.
- For decades, Colorado River water and reclaimed water has been used to recharge and replenish aquifers in the Greater Phoenix area, creating a bank of underground water that can be used during times of surface water shortage.
- Local aquifers are largely protected through the 1980 Groundwater Management Act and the resulting Assured Water Supply Program; groundwater levels are generally stable or improving in Greater Phoenix.
- There will always be challenges to overcome when planning for a resilient water future but water managers continue to innovate. Alongside significant investments at the State and Federal levels, totaling more than \$5 billion in funding, Arizona is actively advancing its efforts for conservation, distribution, and augmentation to address future water needs.
- Families and businesses considering a move to Arizona can trust that water security is a serious focus for both public and private leaders in the region.

Water Future

- The state's intentional water planning makes the subject less daunting than other environmental challenges faced across the U.S.
 - Compared to building expensive infrastructure to minimize the harm caused by floodwater or rising sea levels, moving a defined quantity of water to bolster Arizona's supply is more attainable and affordable.
- Challenges on the Colorado River are real, but they are also solvable.
 - Groundwater in Greater Phoenix has been intentionally protected through the 1980 Groundwater Management Act as a fallback supply for times of Colorado River shortages.

- The federal government, the states and tribes that share the river, as well as the Republic of Mexico have worked successfully to shore up water levels in Lake Mead and they continue to work for a resilient future on the Colorado River.
- Arizona continues to bolster investments in a multi-faceted portfolio of water supplies. The Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) will be a key driver in future planning for long-term water supply augmentation.
 - WIFA funding allocations include over \$1 billion for projects that import new water supplies.
 - WIFA has already awarded over \$100 million to 89 Projects across Arizona from its \$200 million Water Conservation Grant Fund.

Recent Developments Related to Groundwater

- In 2023, Governor Hobbs and the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) unveiled the Phoenix Active Management Area (AMA) Groundwater Model and ADWR's latest study of groundwater conditions across the Phoenix metropolitan area.
- According to the AMA Model, there will be shortfall of approximately 4% of unmet groundwater demands over the next 100-year period.
 - In compliance with Assured Water Supply rules, Arizona temporarily halted approval of new Certificates of Assured Water Supply reliant on groundwater.
- Actions taken as a result of the Model findings protect groundwater for future generations and in no way signal an immediate crisis.

AMA Report Impact:

- The temporary halt does not indicate a water crisis in Arizona but rather demonstrates the effectiveness of existing regulations to ensure regional water security.
- Existing homeowners will not face impacts and will continue to receive water deliveries.
- Existing Certificates and developments utilizing non-groundwater sources are not affected.
- The Model results do no impact new development in the boundaries of cities with a Designation of and Assured Water Supply, including nearly all of the large cities in Greater Phoenix.
- Urban growth in other areas will need to rely on water supplies other than non-replenishable groundwater, aligning with the 1980 Groundwater Management Act.
- Development on non-subdivided land is not subject to the Assured Water Supply Program and will not be affected by the Model results.

Housing:

- All existing housing certificates can proceed as planned. There is a substantial number of housing certificates that have already been approved.
 - Greater Phoenix currently has 1,890,294 residential units, including both multifamily and single-family residences, either under construction, proposed, or approved.
 - Cities with a Designation of an Assured Water Supply can continue to develop their housing stock as planned.
 - In certain areas, growth will need to rely on existing and planned water sources other than groundwater.
- The 1980 Groundwater Management Act and the resulting Assured Water Supply rules work as intended to protect regional groundwater stocks, move development to the use of renewable water supplies, and ensure reliable, resilient water supplies for current and future generations.