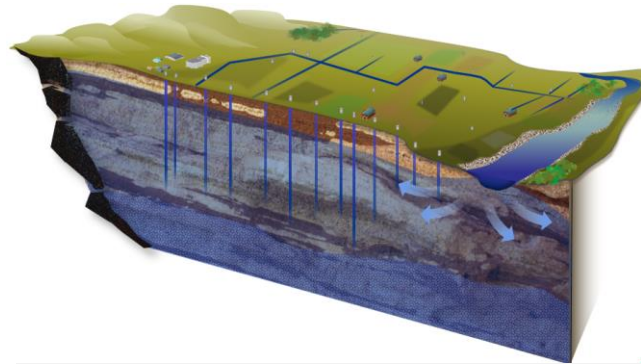


Arizona Rural Groundwater: Get the Facts

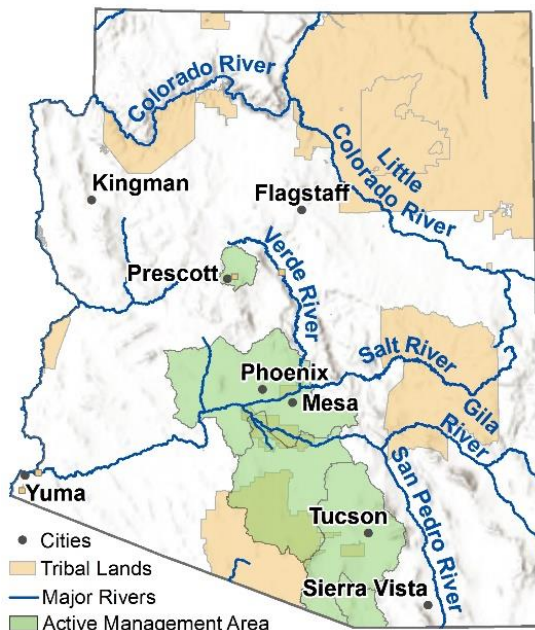


Groundwater is water found underground in the crevices and spaces in soil or rock, supplying springs and wells. It is a vital water supply in Arizona, making up about 40% of the water used within our state in a typical year. **In many Arizona communities, especially rural communities, groundwater is the primary or even *only* supply of water.** It is a critical source of water for residential use, businesses and industry, agriculture, and fish and wildlife. It is also the source of the year-round flow in most of Arizona's rivers and streams, and for springs across the state.



Groundwater and surface water are often connected. Changes in one can affect the other.

How Groundwater Is Managed



About 1.5 million people live in rural Arizona outside of Arizona's five AMAs—where there is little regulation or management of groundwater by the state.

Outside of Arizona's "active management areas" (AMAs)—in what is often referred to as "rural Arizona"—groundwater is largely unregulated. At least outside of sovereign tribal lands, rural Arizona has few tools for its management and no limits on how much can be used.

In practice this means that large new groundwater uses are allowed to occur *even if* they **cause a neighboring well to go dry** or require deepening; *even if* overall there is **more groundwater taken out of the ground than put back in**; and *even if* groundwater use **depletes flows in neighboring rivers or streams**, diminishing supply for other established water users.

As in many places across the West, these issues were not foreseen when Arizona's groundwater laws were first created. There is now a need to address our outdated water policies, which have not kept pace with our current needs.

Impacts on Rural Arizona

Consequences of unrestricted groundwater pumping are becoming prevalent in parts of rural Arizona—and community leaders, residents, and businesses are calling for change. In some areas of the state:

- Homeowners' wells are going dry because of groundwater overuse
- Water supply for communities and for agricultural irrigation is quickly declining as large new users take advantage of the absence of requirements related to groundwater use
- The flow in rivers, streams, and springs has declined or even disappeared, and future flows are threatened
- The situation is beginning to generate conflict among different water users

Solutions Needed

Solutions are needed to address these challenges and protect the economies, natural resources, and way of life in rural Arizona. There is a wide array of local management tools that could be adopted and tailored to meet each community's unique circumstances, allowing local communities to steward their resources for the future.



The Water for Arizona Coalition advocates for more dialogue and resources to be devoted to this challenge, and for solutions that help preserve the future of our state, its waters, and rural livelihoods.

Groundwater as an Economic Driver

Groundwater in Arizona's rural communities is the economic engine supplying water for homes, business, and agriculture.

A 2020 Arizona State University economic study demonstrates that groundwater generates and supports more than:

- \$1.2 trillion in annual economic impact
- 1.4-1.7 million Arizona jobs
- Annual average of 43% of Arizona's annual GDP

These figures represent AMA's only—statewide economic impact exceeds these figures. While data is not available outside the AMA's, we know groundwater is just as critical to jobs, livelihoods, and economic vitality in rural areas of the state.

Leaving so much of the state's groundwater unprotected creates risk and uncertainty. Without long-term, predictable access to groundwater, rural Arizona businesses, communities and way of life are at risk.

The Water for Arizona Coalition supports policies and innovative practices to ensure a reliable water supply to meet the state's needs. Collectively, we have over 60,000 Arizona members, as well as hundreds of hunter, angler, business, and outdoor recreation partners around the state. Learn more at: <https://www.waterforarizona.com>.

