

Water for Arizona Coalition  
HB 2896 (Rural Management Areas) Factsheet, February 13, 2020

The Water for Arizona Coalition (WAC) supports **HB 2896**, allowing county boards of supervisors to establish **Rural Management Areas (RMAs)** to allow for local planning and management of groundwater resources in rural areas.

**Groundwater is an essential resource**, especially for Arizona's rural communities. It is the water supply for homes, industries, and agriculture. In many areas of rural Arizona it is the primary or even only available water supply. It is also the source of year-round flow in many rivers, streams, and springs.

**Rural groundwater resources are unprotected.** Outside of Arizona's Active Management Areas (AMAs) groundwater resources are unprotected. Local communities have very few options for managing their water supplies to meet local needs. In a few areas of the state, groundwater levels are rapidly declining, jeopardizing the water supply and economic future of local communities.

**HB 2896 would support rural communities in creating local solutions to meet local needs.** One size does not fit all. Different areas of the state have different resources, different needs, and different challenges when it comes to water. HB 2896 **allows county boards of supervisors** to create a Rural Management Area for specific groundwater basins or subbasins to address local issues, but only Director of the Department of Water Resources may approve the management plans.

**Under HB 2896 a Rural Management Area (RMA):**

- Can be created in a groundwater basin or subbasin by majority vote of a board of supervisors after public meetings and opportunity for public comment, and the board may also rescind the RMA by a majority vote at any time in the future.
- Can only be created if certain conditions are present in the area (for example, significant increases in water use or physical indications of overpumping)
- Once created is empowered to establish local management goals and a management plan
- Is led by a local advisory council composed of groundwater users appointed by the Governor
- *May* engage in a number of planning functions, including recommending best management practices and other measures for meeting water management goals
- Can be rescinded at any time after its creation by another majority vote of the board of supervisors

**Best management practices and other management measures** for an RMA *may* include voluntary or mandatory conservation programs or practices; voluntary or mandatory programs for metering, monitoring, or reporting of groundwater withdrawals and uses; and/or programs to implement or incentivize aquifer recharge or the mitigation of impacts caused by groundwater withdrawals. These practices can be included as part of a recommended management plan for approval and enactment by the Director of the Department of Water Resources.

The WAC believes that **rural Arizona communities need to be given tools and support** to manage and secure their water future according to local needs and conditions. HB 2896 takes a very important step forward in creating a framework to provide this support.