



Statement from Water for Arizona Coalition on State Legislative Proposals to Fund Arizona's Water Need

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The Water for Arizona Coalition applauds the Arizona Legislature for giving the state's mounting water needs increased attention. Some of the current proposals, such as paying experts at the Department of Water Resources closer to market rates and helping to clarify water rights in the adjudications process, are sensible and long overdue. However, when it comes to securing reliable water supplies for a drier future, more work is needed. Arizona needs new thinking and an "all of the above" strategy that maximizes any investments in our state's water supplies.

"All of the above" means investing in water conservation, reuse, recycling, efficiency, sustainable agriculture, storage and recovery, and aquifer recharge – all of which are proven, cost-effective water security strategies that can be implemented at a fraction of the cost of building massive pipelines to bring water in from out of state. As Arizona faces looming Colorado River shortages, a changing climate, a growing population, and ongoing risks to our groundwater supplies, we have to ensure that we're getting the best possible return from our water investments.

The current proposal for a Drought Mitigation Revolving Fund would place a risky bet: emphasizing a narrow set of ideas largely focused on building massive infrastructure to import water from across the country, pumping and transporting groundwater by the State Land Department to benefit the State Land Trust and recipients of the water, and desalination projects to bring in water from outside the state of Arizona. While this proposal demonstrates the urgency many feel about our water supplies, it also illustrates the dangers of outdated thinking about the best solutions. We cannot rely on old 20th Century "command and control" strategies to respond to our new reality. This current proposal would divert attention and resources away from fully utilizing other proven, lower-cost water security strategies.

The state Legislature should leverage the expertise and contributions of multiple stakeholders to fund and implement an "all of the above" strategy and do so in a transparent, rigorous, and science-based process that allows for public input and comment.

We can't let grand plans for water importation distract us from reality – we have unfinished business to attend to. We must update the 1980 Groundwater Management Act to actually ensure safe yield. We must finally address the fact that in 80% of the state there is no management of groundwater pumping and no protections for property owners who rely on domestic wells or for rivers that depend on groundwater for flows. We must stay focused on getting our house in order on water policy and programs to ensure water security for Arizona for generations to come.

About the Water for Arizona Coalition

The Water for Arizona Coalition is a community of Arizonans who support innovative practices and smart policies to ensure a reliable water supply to meet the state's needs. Organizational support is provided by solution-oriented groups like American Rivers, Audubon Arizona, Business for Water Stewardship Environmental Defense Action Fund, and Western Resource Advocates that collectively have over 60,000 Arizona members, as well as hundreds of hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreation enthusiasts across the state. Kevin Moran, a longtime Arizonan and former government relations consultant, is the chairman of the Coalition.

