



Water for Arizona Coalition

Priority Water Policy Initiatives

September 2020

The Water for Arizona Coalition (WAC) works to ensure water policies and programs that support reliable and clean water supplies for all people, healthy flowing rivers and streams, vibrant communities, and resilient economies. The Coalition is pursuing three broad water policy initiatives essential to the future of water supplies in the state.

Protect Groundwater Supplies. Groundwater makes up about 40% of Arizona’s water supply. In much of what is referred to as “rural” Arizona—which comprises about 85% of the state’s footprint and where some 1.5 million people live—Arizona law essentially allows “open access” groundwater pumping, meaning there are few restrictions on how much groundwater can be withdrawn and used. Groundwater is the primary and often only water supply available to many rural residents and businesses, and is the source of year-round flow in most rivers, streams, and springs. WAC believes that rural Arizona communities should be empowered with the tools and support they need to best secure their water future according to their needs, their vision, and local conditions.

In the populous central part of the state where groundwater is already managed, it is important that existing protections remain in place, as potential threats continue to arise that would weaken the 1980 Groundwater Code. The management of groundwater resources in these areas has been central to the region’s economic development and livability. Weakening of existing protections could jeopardize long-term water supplies for the region and the state as a whole.

Secure Colorado River Supplies for the Long Term. Another 40% of Arizona’s water supply comes from the Colorado River. The Colorado River system is badly out of balance, with the amount of water taken out greatly exceeding what flows into the river system in a given year. The 2007 Colorado River Operating Guidelines must be renegotiated by the seven Colorado River Basin states and Mexico by 2026. The new guidelines will govern the releases of water from Lake Powell and Lake Mead for the entire river system and the 40 million people who depend on it. WAC participates on the Arizona Reconsultation Committee, which will guide Arizona’s efforts in the coming years to protect Colorado River supplies, resolve long-standing imbalances, and determine how Arizona will manage and continue to thrive as pressures on our water supplies increase.

Clean Water for Arizona. Arizona’s drinking water supplies and the water quality of Arizona’s rivers and streams are at risk because a new rule reduces the number of waterways protected under the federal Clean Water Act. WAC is participating in the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality’s stakeholder advisory process to design a new, state-level surface water quality protection program. We support a state program that adequately protects Arizona waterways from pollution, and safeguards those who rely on clean water for drinking, agriculture and ranching, recreation, wildlife habitat, and other uses. Clean water is fundamental to Arizona residents’ quality of life, health, and economic opportunities.

The Water for Arizona Coalition is comprised of Arizonans who support 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>.

