



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION SUMMARY STATEMENTS From Community Outreach Programs following the 107th Arizona Town Hall

In programs held around the state to follow up on the fall 2015 Town Hall titled "Keeping Arizona's Water Glass Full," audience members were asked to participate in a Town Hall-style discussion on priorities and action items. Statements prepared from the discussions at the Outreach Programs are set forth below.

FLAGSTAFF (January 29, 2016)

Water is critical to our state's economic development. We tend to focus on the consumptive nature of water but need to ensure that we include environmental values and habitat preservation. We should also recognize that water usage includes the water that goes into our food and even includes the water that supports our forests.

Education is an important factor in raising the awareness of conservation issues. After increasing that awareness, we should consider market mechanisms including pricing water in a way that more accurately reflects its true overall cost and incents the best use of water. We should also consider novel approaches including a fee for water replenishment for high demand users.

Conservation and augmentation are key issues for Arizona to consider including tiered water rates for residential and commercial users, modernizing building codes, providing incentives for decreased water usage, increasing water re-use and the use of grey water, and investing in additional water storage capacity.

Since 80% of our water usage is for agriculture, we need to consider what crops are being grown in the state and incentives are needed to foster growing crops that require less water. Water rights holders may have to be willing to accept new restrictions on what they can do with their water.

The critical importance of water to the state requires that we be inclusive in reaching recommendations. For example, Tribes control more than 50% of Arizona's Colorado River water and 30-40% of the Verde water.

The adjudication of water rights needs to be streamlined and simplified so as to ensure more expedient and equitable resolution of water rights. We need clarity on these rights for everyone to move forward with planning for the future.

PRESCOTT – EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY (February 10, 2016)

Keeping Arizona's water glass full starts with education and public awareness. This is especially critical given the challenges of trying to reach everyone in the state.

The value of conservation cannot be overstated. We need to increase water reuse and ways of accomplishing it inexpensively. This includes promoting and incentivizing the use of recycled and grey water as both are the inevitable direction for the state. We would also benefit from a study looking at where the greatest impact can be realized in saving water.

Going beyond conservation, individual Arizona citizens could use rain water catches and make changes in landscaping to retain water.

We need to address both the legal and financial issues that will enable us to add and expand our water infrastructure including the need to be able to effectively store water. We should also implement tiered water rates with disincentives for extreme residential water usage.

Forest management is important as thinning overgrown trees can increase water availability and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.

We need to be more effectively managing our water resources and the Arizona Department of Water Resources needs to be properly funded to achieve that goal.

Innovative, out of the box solutions such as a water pipeline from Canada could be considered and could benefit the Canadian economy and bring needed water to Arizona.

Farmers, ranchers, business people, developers and all citizens need to come together in public and private partnerships bringing all Arizonans together to achieve consensus and solutions on this critical issue.

VERDE VALLEY (February 23, 2016)

It is critically important to look at creative and innovative approaches to conservation and augmentation beginning with education and awareness and including building codes, land use, forest restoration and treatment.

The community of Clarkdale has taken the step of identifying and encouraging natural, non-invasive species and discouraging invasive species to help augment water supply.

We are all one region and yet we sometimes go in different directions. Where will our water come from tomorrow? We all need to come together. The existing Active Management Area (AMA) structure has served us well and should be continued to enable collective water management.

Agriculture is historically important to this region – it has long provided economic development and the wine industry has proven to be a low water user and high economic driver here in the Verde Valley.

Each of us has an individual responsibility to understand the impact our everyday lives have on water usage. Consideration should be given to creating incentives for low water use landscaping. One homeowner multiplied many times creates a huge overall impact.

YUMA – AG SUMMIT (FEBRUARY 25, 2016)

It's critical to preserve agriculture's water rights. To accomplish this goal, the agriculture industry needs to do a better job of collecting data, documenting efficiency and documenting impact. Those involved in the agriculture industry can then use this information to better tell its story. These studies can provide support for how the industry uses water efficiently. They can also demonstrate how agriculture positively impacts the economy and the environment and how all of these elements work together and are linked together.

To accomplish this goal, we should consider partnering with the University of Arizona and others who can develop and implement studies that gather data. These studies can help the agriculture community determine where and how it can optimize resources. Studies like these can also help the agriculture industry tell its story better.

We need to tell our story using a unified voice and in partnership with others. We can do this through water organizations like the Agribusiness and Water Council of Arizona (www.agribusinessarizona.org) and the Arizona Department of Agriculture. We should tell the story as organizations, individuals, and with both traditional media and social media. Personal contact is also important. We need to share the story not only with policymakers but also with our friends, our neighbors and our children.

We need to ensure that we have a properly supported and funded governmental agency that can tell Arizona's story at the national level and that can properly protect Arizona's water. Specifically, we need to strengthen and properly fund the ADWR.

The city of Yuma also needs to be involved with the farming community in protecting water rights for our area.

PHOENIX – SOROPTIMIST (March 3, 2016)

Arizona needs a long-term focus on groundwater and should seriously consider allowing new groundwater management frameworks to be established outside the Active Management Areas (AMAs). If Arizona can augment or develop an additional water supply for these areas it will be far easier to establish these new frameworks.

Arizona needs to address the structural deficit of Colorado River water supplies due to over-allocation. However, it is unclear how that will occur particularly when long-term drought has exacerbated the deficit and when the lower basin states have not yet agreed to compromise their relative allocations.

Arizona needs a consistent cultural focus on conservation. Additionally, reducing groundwater reliance beyond replenishment capacity is critical to ensuring the continued viability of this critical resource. This will also ensure that groundwater is a banked resource for times of reduced watershed. A continued focus on public education will be necessary to nurture a conservation ethic in future generations.

PRESCOTT – LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CENTRAL YAVAPAI COUNTY (March 5, 2016)

To better provide for Arizona's water future, we need to rebuild and adequately fund the Arizona Department of Water Resources. To accomplish this goal, in a state where many believe that smaller government is best, we should find ways to educate the public about what ADWR does and why that work is important to their interests. We should also consider what other governmental agencies and activities are performing functions that are less valuable than those provided by ADWR, and reallocate those resources to funding and staffing ADWR.

In addressing Arizona's water issues, ideally there should be cooperation and coordination among all the stakeholders. However, to develop a consensus based approach will require effective leadership at all levels.

It is unlikely that Arizona will have access to significant new water supplies. That being the case, there should be greater focus on reclaimed water and mandatory conservation. Reduction of water usage should be encouraged wherever possible, including in landscaping, municipal development in keeping with Arizona's desert climate. Arizona should establish and enforce safe yield requirements within and outside of AMAs and throughout the state, to conserve scarce supplies of groundwater. Arizona should carefully consider reallocation or re-prioritization of existing water supplies to satisfy the most important uses. We should also consider the impact on wildlife and the environment.

Arizonans should be encouraged to become informed about water supply issues, and should take advantage of the many fine sources of technical and policy information such as CWAG. Once informed, Arizonans should take action to communicate their views to elected leaders, and to support and vote for leaders who will take action consistent with those views.

SHOW LOW (March 12, 2016)

Water scarcity is an issue that affects all Arizonans. One factor that contributes to water scarcity is pollution of water supplies. Those who pollute water supplies should be fined to cover the cost of treating that water for reuse.

Conservation and reuse of water can be a significant contributor to water supplies. Individuals should avoid wasting water, and implement various measures both to reduce water consumption and augment supply at low cost, by harvesting rainwater. Individuals can use gray water for certain purposes. Information about the reuse of household water is available on water provider and water agency websites, but more could be done to educate residents about water conservation and reuse.

In many parts of the state ground water is a large part of the community water supply. Currently outside of AMAs there is no regulation of water use. Even in water scarce areas uses that seem unwise, e.g., bottling water for sale, are not subject to regulation. Water rights and appropriation under current Arizona law may not be consistent with what most would consider the highest and best use of the water supply, and consideration should be given to assuring that water uses in areas served by small water companies are sustainable, and supplies are allocated fairly.

In forested areas of the state, maintaining healthy forests is important to the economic health of the community as well as to water production. The Forest Service and local communities should work together to establish appropriate criteria for thinning of forests, and release of forested acreage for logging and thinning operations.

Additional or statewide regulation of water uses may be cause for concern. We should avoid spending funds on regulation that could be better spent on maintaining or augmenting water supplies. It is important for local communities to be involved in decisions that affect allocation and use of water within Arizona to be sure that all regions and users are treated fairly. It is also important for Arizona to be effectively represented in negotiations with other states over allocation and use of the Colorado River.

WEST VALLEY (March 15, 2016)

Water is critical to the future of Arizona and the factor most important for ensuring that we have the water we need is leadership. We also need to properly fund the ADWR which has been decimated with budget cuts.

Education is important. One way to ensure more Arizonans are educated about water is to have water education included as part of the Arizona Career College readiness standards. Local school boards can also add water education to the curriculum of grade schools.

We need to educate all ages about conservation, the role of innovation for securing additional supplies, how to ensure safe and adequate water supplies and why it is important to invest in water infrastructure.

We need to educate everyone about actions they can take individually. For example, individuals can take action to ensure that pharmaceuticals and other items are not dumped into the water supply.

We should also consider water storage underground which eliminates waste into the atmosphere.

Finally, we may also want to consider tiered water rates to encourage water conservation.

TUCSON (March 23, 2016)

To better conserve water, we should emphasize education and public awareness so that all Arizonans – including our newest neighbors– understand why we need to conserve water.

Many Arizona residents come from other states that do not share Arizona's water supply challenges. We have the opportunity to educate our newer residents, and our newest generation, about why growing green lawns complicates Arizona's water future, and what large-scale, long-term water challenges face Arizona. This is a call to action for all of us.

We should appropriately fund and staff the Arizona Department of Water Resources. When government makes decisions about water, we should make sure that these decisions represent the consensus of all Arizonans. Government should listen to all stakeholders, including tribal governments and representatives from all areas of the state.

Our policy discussions should be frank and realistic. Population growth is inevitable and conservation alone is not a solution. Solutions require legal, technological, planning and political changes, and these will not be cheap or fast. We should plan wisely and on a scale that meets the scope of the challenges.

We should examine reforms to Arizona's water laws. We should consider ways to have new development that takes our water needs into account. Those involved with new construction should shoulder some of the costs of developing a sustainable water future.

We should invest in and examine improvements to Arizona water infrastructure, and should support state and local officials in their efforts to engineer and fund these improvements. We should continue to innovate and seek new technology and new policies to help us to better reuse water and to better develop potable water from our existing water supply.

SIERRA VISTA (March 24, 2016)

It's critical that we have a communication effort that tells the story in a way that allows the average citizen to understand the importance of water in Arizona. It's helpful to have a catalyst and it would be preferable that the catalyst is not a crisis. Communication and education are the foundation for resolving all other issues relating to water in Arizona. Education should begin in our schools so that our children can be change agents but it should extend to all ages and all people in our community. For example, we can inform residents on a regular basis about how much water we are using. This can help raise awareness on a very personal level.

The crisis that Flint, Michigan and California are experiencing with water can be the inspiration for communications that educate Arizonans and encourage them to take a proactive approach to ensuring that we have a secure and safe water supply now and in the future. We can also share the stories of success that many Arizona communities are experiencing in managing their water which can provide inspiration for other communities.

We should consider policies that encourage water awareness and conservation. This could include different methods for pricing water or a water authority (such as a local water district) that has the ability to have impact with enforcement powers.

As individuals we need to communicate with the Governor's Water Augmentation Council and with our state legislators.

Legislative influence at the state level is critical. To ensure that Cochise County has the voice needed to have an impact, we should collaborate with other rural districts and other organizations. Collaboration among all groups is important for ensuring that Cochise County's water needs are met.

DOUGLAS (March 24, 2016)

To ensure we have the water we need for the future, education is critical. We need to have more areas in the community where residents can learn about water—how we get it and what we can do as individuals and as a community to ensure that we have enough quality water to meet our needs.

When there are limited resources for accomplishing our water goals, we need to partner with state agencies and other organizations.

We need to be proactive in managing water. We also need to create incentives for people to manage water wisely.

As individuals, we can educate others through social media. We can also have conversations with friends and family members that inform them about water. We can take actions ourselves that conserve water such as reducing the amount of time taking a shower or scheduling the times and methods we use for watering lawns. We can also begin initiatives that allow our community to learn how much water we use on a daily basis. Once we raise awareness about our individual water use, it's likely that individuals will take greater action to conserve water and that we as a community can have a big impact on our overall water use.

YUMA (April 7, 2016)

Water conservation needs to be in the forefront of our legislators' minds when making new laws about water. Water conservation and augmentation should include a focus on water technology that allows us to reuse brackish water. With respect to brackish water, Yuma needs to get on board with developing programs and technology that allow Yuma to reuse brackish water for different purposes. Yuma should also support and strengthen its relationship with the Secretary of Interior to ensure that our water supplies are protected for the future.

When devising solutions that require funding, we should take into account that the public is willing to invest in new technology that ensures a safe water supply. Arizonans are also generally in favor of protecting agriculture's water supply. Water is essential to Arizona's economy. Investors are increasingly taking into account whether communities are using water efficiently when they decide to invest or do business in a community. As individuals, we need to back leaders and legislators who support water conservation and who champion investments that secure our water future.

Incentives and education are also important for ensuring our future water needs are met. We should consider incentives for urban areas that encourage them to conserve water. For example, incentives could be provided for communities to invest in technology that allows consumers to immediately know when a leak has developed. We should also educate our children and the public about the sources of water, how we use water, what happens to water after we use it and how to conserve water better (including uses of native plants that require less water). Marketing and messaging are critical for these efforts.

GLENDALE – AZ WATER ASSOCIATION (May 12, 2016)

Arizona should move forward with Arizona's strategic vision of water sustainability as articulated by ADWR, including the vision for rural areas such as Sierra Vista and Payson. Arizona also should streamline the water rights adjudications to give communities greater surety regarding their water futures, and consider selective adjustments to laws and policies to bring them into the 21st century.

Arizona is in a water deficit situation on the Colorado, and faces prospective deficits elsewhere. There are two ways to address deficits, reduce use or bring in new water supplies. There is already broad support for water conservation measures. Conservation and direct and potable reuse efforts should be continued and expanded. Some recommend that Arizona bring in water from other regions. For example, salt water from the Gulf of California might be stored behind the Imperial Dam, and the Arizona Water Banking Authority authorized to allocate that water to address the shortages on the Colorado River. Others suggest that water be obtained from other regions that appear to have surplus water supplies. While these suggestions may have merit, there is concern that these additional water supplies may not be feasible or reliable. Before we assume that a new supply will solve our water supply deficits we must assure that the supply is portable, safe, reliable and sustainable.

Education also can play an important role in addressing Arizona's water supply issues. STEM education could emphasize development of 21st century solutions to water conservation and use issues. Adults need to be educated about the role of water utilities and the need for increases in water rates to fund needed infrastructure and improvements. They also need to be educated about the complexities of water supply and use issues.

ANTHEM (May 13, 2016)

Wise public policy regarding water requires that we integrate a broader supply/demand perspective about water in the desert with specific decision making processes, such as the private water company rate setting process at the Arizona Corporation Commission. This policy should recognize the complex economic tradeoffs involved, such as the fact that successful conservation efforts produce revenue problems for municipal and private water providers. A key consideration of the system is infrastructure. While it may be possible to augment supply through capture of greywater or de-salinization, it cannot be used if there is no infrastructure to deliver it.

In addition to resources for infrastructure, we need to adequately fund basic water management, such as the monitoring role of Arizona Department of Water Resources. It is important to recognize that water flows in a complex natural system, such that when you take water from one place, it is not available in another place. Therefore, it is critical that we dedicate resources to studying, planning and managing this complex system.

Overall, it is critical that the public not be passive about water policy and adequate water supply. We should not wait until there is a crisis before we make important decisions to address our challenges. One challenge we have in helping the public to be engaged in making those long term decisions is that we are a state of transplants, growing up in other states with different perspectives about water. When people move to Arizona, it is important that they receive education and have access to factual information to understand how water works in Arizona and what we need to do in common to ensure an adequate supply now and in the future.