

Open up a local newspaper on almost any given day and you will most likely see comments on how the area is unable to support new development or that our area is in a water crisis. Interestingly enough, however, when one views historical data dating back to 1965 on water, we find the area is using about the same amount of water as it did 50 years ago. Obviously, the manner in which it is being used today is different than it was back then, with much of the land being used for agricultural purposes from 1965 until 1985. However, it does help bring things into perspective for us.

Central Arizona Partnership agrees that water is a precious commodity that needs to be managed; however, we also recognize that in order for our area to be economically viable, providing jobs and opportunity for young families, the discussion about water needs to be focused around sustainable, managed and responsible growth. To put it simply, without managed growth, we will find ourselves struggling to pay for basic services and we will undoubtedly be faced with higher taxes. Prescott, Prescott Valley, Chino Valley and the surrounding area is quite attractive and is going to grow, the question is, do we put our heads in the sand and allow it to happen in unincorporated areas with exempt wells and septic tanks or do we welcome it and manage it with an appropriate and well thought out plan.

The Prescott Active Management Area (AMA) was established in 1980 by the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) to help manage our areas groundwater. The Prescott AMA covers roughly 485 square miles within central Yavapai County, and consists of 2 sub-basins. The Little Chino sub-basin, which encompasses the western and northern portions of the Prescott AMA, and the Upper Agua Fria sub-basin which covers the southeast portion. The Prescott AMA is estimated to have 3 million acre-feet of groundwater in storage, with an annual withdraw estimated at 20,000 acre-feet. Taking into account the natural procession of water recharge, recent reports from ADWR indicate there to be a yearly drawdown (negative balance) of the aquifer of 8-inches or less per year. Let us help put this into context for you:

- The aquifer is at least 500-feet in depth.
- At a yearly draw down of 8-inches per year, that would leave us with at least 750-years of water as we currently stand.

Based on the above math we can see we have some time to start figuring out how to deal with the drawdown, but it is important that we begin these discussions today so as not to be caught off

guard in the future. Understanding what water the area has and promoting conservation and the development and utilization of renewable water credits is key in helping us move forward; however, that alone will most likely not satisfy our drawdown issue. Being an organization dedicated towards responsible growth, Central Arizona Partnership understands that something additional needs to be done to contend with this issue.

There are many areas that could and should be explored when speaking about water. Some ideas needing to be explored include 1) water importation from the Big Chino; 2) water importation from other various means; 3) purchasing of water rights from other areas; 4) water conservation and efficiency for both existing homes and developments and new homes and developments. It is Central Arizona Partnership's goal to help the community understand and explore these and other options as we move forward and address the water situation our area is faced with. We welcome your thoughts and comments in exploring this topic as we continue to educate our community.

Central Arizona Partnership members are a diverse mix of central Yavapai County business owners, educators, health care and civic leaders and business professionals who care deeply about their communities and believe issues related to smart, responsible growth need to be truthfully examined, debated wisely and acted on effectively in order to secure a prosperous, sustainable future and high-quality of life for everyone.