



CWAG 2018 Candidate Forum Questions & Answers

CWAG asked the first four questions below of the Legislative District 1 candidates for the Arizona Legislature plus three audience questions. There was not time for Q5.

- I. **Q1. Describe our water problem:** LD1 includes the Prescott Active Management Area, the Big Chino Valley, and the Verde River. What do you consider to be LD 1's key water resource issues?
 - A. We are pumping too much groundwater. According to the Fourth Management Plan (through 2012) for the Prescott Active Management Area, the overdraft was about 18,000 acre-feet/year. To visualize this, imagine a football field flooded to a depth of 3.5 miles! This not sustainable. Wells on the edges of the aquifer are now going dry. Despite this, over 16,000 homes are slated for a Certificate of Assured Water Supply based on legally available "paper" water. And there are no plans to address the overdraft.
 - B. Unregulated groundwater pumping in the Big Chino Valley threatens the base flow of the Verde River and wells in the Big Chino Valley.
- II. **Q2. Water for Development:** In the Prescott Active Management Area (PrAMA), we are pumping five billion gallons more than is recharged each year, groundwater levels continue to decline, and some residential wells are going dry. Meanwhile, state water law continues to permit the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) to issue 100-year Assured Water Supply Certificates. When citizens express concern about rapid population growth in the face of drought and our shrinking water supply, how do you respond? What ideas do you have for legislation to strengthen our water laws so that Arizonans really will have water for 100 years and beyond?
 - A. Arizona water law is designed to support development, not to achieve a sustainable water supply.
 - B. Potential statewide legislative remedies:
 1. Require statewide conjunctive management of surface and groundwater.
 2. Make Safe Yield a requirement, not a goal. For AMAs that do not comply:
 - a) Require all water providers and major water users in the AMA to submit water conservation plans for approval by ADWR.
 - b) Require aggressive conservation measures, including increasingly stringent targets.
 - c) For all new construction, prohibit landscape groundwater use.
 - d) Create water conservation incentive programs for domestic exempt wells.
 3. Create a Big Chino AMA or water district with the management requirement to maintain the base flow of the Verde River. An AMA would use an existing state agency, ADWR, to manage the AMA and avoid creating a new layer of government.
 4. Require all water providers and major water users in the state to submit locally acceptable water conservation plans for approval by ADWR.
 5. Require ADWR to research and develop homes that have net-zero groundwater-use.

6. Legalize Direct Potable Reuse.
7. Provide adequate funding for ADWR.
8. Prohibit HOA rules that require high water use landscaping or discourage rainwater-harvesting systems.
9. Restore the AZ tax credit or provide incentives to support residential drought-tolerant landscaping and rainwater harvesting systems.

III. **Q3. Water for Springs and Rivers:** Arizona water law has failed to protect our flowing springs and rivers, such as the Verde River, and the associated ecosystems. A coalition of environmental organizations proposed corrective legislation in 2018 but received no committee hearing. Do you believe that this is a role for state government? What ideas do you have for legislation to protect our remaining rivers and springs? What steps would you take to pass the bill?

- A. Water resource management is absolutely a role of state government because water is not a private property right. Citizens have a right to use water subject to state law, but do not own water underlying or flowing through their property. The state has the responsibility to manage water in the public interest.
- B. Require ADWR to consider, publicly and transparently, the effects of its decisions on streams and springs. Establish an Ecological Water Advisory Workgroup with broad environmental representation to advise and inform ADWR.
- C. Develop policies to keep water in streams, including permitting transfers or leasing (both long and short-term) of groundwater and surface water to maintain stream flow.
- D. Revise instream flow regulations to become more effective in maintaining flowing rivers.

IV. **Q4. Water District:** Currently groundwater in the Big Chino Valley is unregulated. There are four future threats to the Big Chino groundwater: the Big Chino Valley Pumped Storage project, the Big Chino pipeline project, growth and development, and expanded agricultural irrigation. Unless these threats are addressed, the upper Verde River and some Paulden wells will dry up. A regulatory district with the authority to manage groundwater in the Big Chino Valley could protect domestic wells and the base flow of the Verde River. Is this a good idea? Why or why not? Do you have another plan?

- A. A Big Chino Water District is a good idea because it will make it possible to regulate groundwater pumping. Currently there is no cap on groundwater withdrawals, which are reducing and will potentially dry Verde Springs and the upper Verde River.
 1. The management requirement, not a goal, must include preserving the base flow and protecting domestic wells in Paulden.
 2. The Big Chino Water District would be different from an AMA. The board would be locally elected, with environmental representation, to provide local control and have authority to achieve the management requirement.
- B. Merging the Big Chino Valley into the Prescott AMA is a bad idea because the PrAMA management goal would facilitate the destruction of the upper Verde.

V. **Q5. Preventative Measures:** We are pumping far more groundwater than is sustainable, yet population growth is accelerating. This can't continue forever, and eventually there will be a reckoning. What preventative steps would you be willing to take now? For example: Required conservation?

Construction moratorium? Requiring drought tolerant plants and rainwater harvesting for all new construction?

- A. Generally, it is easier, cheaper, and less painful to prevent a problem as opposed to repairing it.
- B. Aggressive conservation measures have enormous potential but have not yet been deployed in Arizona.
- C. Increasing block rate structures should aggressively penalize high water users and fund further water conservation efforts.
- D. Although landscape water controls are extremely important, they are not effectively used.
 - 1. For new construction, groundwater should not be used outdoors.
 - 2. For existing construction, substantial incentives to conserve must be offered.
- E. Voluntary indoor conservation has very limited effectiveness and is not an adequate solution. For conservation to be effective:
 - 1. For all new construction, aggressive conservation should be required.
 - 2. For existing water users, substantial incentives to conserve must be offered.