

Talk of the Town: Why should we conserve water?

By LESLIE HOY, Special to the Courier

I've been a member of the Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) since our beginning in 2002. Over the years, especially during the rapid residential growth period in the early 2000s and, again now, when we or others encourage people to conserve, someone always asks, "Why should I conserve when the water I save goes to more growth?"

At the Feb. 3 Prescott Council Subcommittee on Water Issues meeting, as part of her update on the city's Long-Term Water Management Plan, Water Resources Project Manager Leslie Graser displayed graphics showing the city's water obligations. This discussion begins at 1:05:48 on the Feb. 3 meeting video at <https://prescottaz.portal.civicclerk.com/> .

The obligations include the Intergovernmental Agreement related to the Chino Valley Irrigation District, the Chino Valley commercial corridor, state land within the city limits, the Arizona Eco Development North and South annexations, Stringfield Ranch (outside the city limits but a former council agreed to serve them water), and the Deep Well Ranch Masterplan (water was allocated for 10,500 homes [4-5 dwellings per acre if no land is added]). The agreement with Deep Well also specified that water for any nonresidential, hospitality or open space/civic development would come from the city's "general pool of water."

In other words, the growth issue has already left the barn. The question for the city now is how to supply water and delivery infrastructure for current residents and all the growth already approved.

So why should we conserve water?

The city's options for increasing our water supply are few: conservation, stormwater capture, advanced water purification (formerly known as direct potable reuse), and importing water from the Big Chino aquifer, which can happen only if there is some way to mitigate (make up for) the water needed to protect the upper Verde River.

Conservation is the "low-hanging fruit," the least expensive and the least complicated path forward. Conserving as much as each of us can now will put off making the eventual larger expenditures for the other options. Even more important in my personal opinion is that we need to assure water for all our kids, grandkids, and great grandkids.

Visit the city's conservation site for lots of helpful conservation info: <https://prescottwater.com/> . There you'll find how to get a free water conservation kit, ideas on how to conserve both indoors and outdoors, and links to even more conservation information.

You'll also find information on the conservation rebates the city offers for rain barrels and cisterns, rain gardens, turf replacement, irrigation timers, washing machines, toilets, and hot water recirculation systems.

To help us spot leaks and better manage our water use, the city is in the process of replacing our old water meters with new ones that let us access our meter info. Learn more at <https://prescott-az.gov/water-ops/how-to- FAQs/#water-meter-changeout> .

Conserving outdoors is especially important because 30% of our water use goes to watering our yards. Active and passive rainwater harvesting can help reduce our outdoor water use.

On Saturday, March 14, from 10 a.m. to noon, Nicole Parks, Sustainable Built Environments project manager for Watershed Management Group, will cover the basics of active and passive rainwater harvesting, the best practices and the context to understand why these practices are important to support native vegetation and our waterways. Her presentation will be followed by audience Q&A.

City of Prescott Water Resources Project Manager Tracie Beasley will be at our meeting to answer your questions about the city's rainwater harvesting and other conservation rebates.

Nicole will be speaking to us "live" on Zoom but we'll also gather to watch her presentation in the meeting room at Granite Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Details under "Next Event" at www.cwagaz.org .

Leslie Hoy is a CWAG board member and a resident of Prescott since 1999.