

# The Daily Courier

Tuesday, January 07, 2014

## Talk of the Town: What every citizen should know about water

By LESLIE HOY  
Special to the Courier

Tuesday, January 07, 2014

In 2014, our political decision-makers will take important steps toward assuring (or not) our water future and the continuing life of our rivers and streams. We hear the various pertinent entities plea for citizen involvement. Without citizen participation and oversight, special interests - such as the Home Builders Association of Central Arizona and Arizona Association of Realtors - will provide the only input on the critical water decisions that affect all of us. Following are some things every citizen should know.

**Importation Projects:** Studies are underway on two potential importation projects. A pipeline from the Big Chino Water Ranch is a joint venture by Prescott and Prescott Valley, bringing groundwater from the Big Chino Sub-basin. Because studies by multiple government agencies have shown that this pumping would decrease the base flow in the upper Verde River, the proposed pipeline is very controversial.

In 2010, the [City of Prescott](#) and the [Town of Prescott Valley](#) entered into an "agreement in principle" with the [Salt River Project](#) (SRP), promising to mitigate any potential diminishment of the Verde and to conduct monitoring, modeling and mitigation studies in the Big Chino Valley. Monitoring and modeling studies are currently in process.

In 2009, Prescott voters passed the Taxpayer Protection Initiative which requires voter approval of certain high-value projects of \$40 million or more. The Big Chino Pipeline, which would cost well over that amount, has not yet been brought to a vote.

The second potential importation project could result from the Central Yavapai Highlands Water Resource Management Study, a regional effort under the auspices of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR).

The first phase of the study determined that potential future demands by 2050 could greatly exceed supplies by tens of thousands of acre-feet. Phase II identified potential sources of water to satisfy the unmet demands. During Phase III, the study identified eight alternatives that matched potential sources with unmet demands.

The alternatives include importing water from the Colorado River, as well as groundwater development in the Big Chino, additional sources of effluent, capturing and storing unappropriated Verde River floodwater, and rainwater harvesting.

Meetings are now underway to acquaint officials and the public with what's been done so far in preparation for deciding which or whether any of the alternatives should be advanced for a BOR Feasibility Study. Because the Feasibility Study will require additional funding, it's important for citizens to keep an eye on this issue and let officials know what we think.

It remains to be seen what the cost of our future water supply will be and whether we, the current and/or future taxpayers, will be willing to pay. Learn more at [www.yavapai.us/bc-wac/cyhwrms](http://www.yavapai.us/bc-wac/cyhwrms).

**USGS MODEL:** The Northern Arizona Regional Groundwater Flow Model (NARGFM) was developed by the

U.S. Geological Survey in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Water Resources and Yavapai County for use primarily by water managers and communities. The water managers for Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley raised a number of objections to using the model, most of which the USGS addressed. Prescott, Prescott Valley and SRP are now exploring potential revisions to the USGS model to address the municipalities' perceived inadequacies of the model. Meanwhile, other Northern Arizona communities, consultants for various entities and the Citizens Water Advocacy Group are running the NARGFM and finding it to be a useful tool.

Conservation: Importing water will be costly. Conservation is cheaper, faster and easier. We Prescottonians over the last few years have reduced our water use. However, we can do more - especially when it comes to water for landscaping.

We needn't view outdoor conservation as a penalty for living in a water-stressed area. The City of Prescott provides gorgeous examples and useful advice for landscaping with low-water-use plants at [www.prescottwatersmart.com](http://www.prescottwatersmart.com). And our local garden centers stock a wide variety to choose from. But, we customers need to ask. Businesses will sell what we want to buy.

Increasingly, Arizona residents are using rainwater harvesting to conserve water and supplement landscape irrigation needs. Learn more in the water conservation section at [www.cityofprescott.net](http://www.cityofprescott.net).

We have important choices to make for our water future. How much will we spend? How hard will we work to conserve? When our children and grandchildren look back, will they be proud of the decisions we made?

Please submit your questions or comments to [info@cwagaz.org](mailto:info@cwagaz.org).

Kyle Brown, City of Flagstaff, will speak to CWAG on Saturday, Feb. 8. See [www.cwagaz.org](http://www.cwagaz.org) for more information.

Leslie Hoy is a CWAG board member and a 15-year resident of Prescott.

## Related Links:

---

">Content © 2014

">Software © 1998-2014 **1up! Software**, All Rights Reserved