

UN WATER  
**22 MARCH**  
**WORLD WATER DAY**  
2025 Glacier Preservation

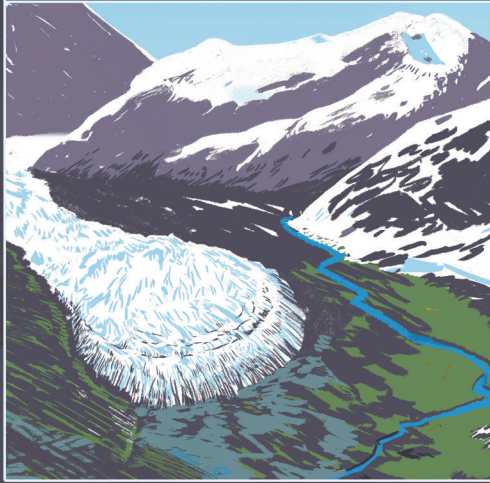


Image: Amy Fee

**SWEETWATER**  
WETLANDS



WOMEN IN WATER  
DIPLOMACY NETWORK



## Reflections: On World Water Day 2025 and Local to Global Engagement

by Sharon B. Megdal  
March 21, 2025

**M**arch 22 is the annual **World Water Day**. Since 1993, the United Nations has designated this day to bring awareness to different aspects of freshwater availability. This year, the focus is on glacier preservation. The five most recent foci were leveraging water for peace, accelerating change, groundwater, valuing water, and water and climate change. For each World Water Day, a report is issued by the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). This year's report, issued on March 21, 2025, can be found on [WWAP's website](#).

Even though the status of glaciers may seem far removed from the water situation of Arizona and the Southwestern United States, World Water Day nevertheless calls attention to the interconnected aspects of water availability and use. Many in the world rely on water flows that emanate from glacier melts. Changing melting patterns may influence flooding and affect water availability for communities, food and energy production, natural systems, and all else that requires water. The public's water availability concerns are better informed when communities of practice share approaches to water challenges. This information sharing is crucial to identifying strategies for addressing these challenges. Raising water awareness, which World Water Day does, is also important.

I find that engagement at multiple levels is beneficial for keeping on top of water circumstances and concerns. Teaching my Spring semester graduate course, Water Policy in Arizona and Semi-arid Regions, enables me to interact with students from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. Their perspectives and questions are insightful. On the morning of this year's World Water Day, students and I will visit [Sweetwater Wetlands](#), a hidden oasis in the desert from which I can explain a lot about our region's water management. Easily accessible, I often take visiting water experts there. In addition, I have already spoken several times in 2025 to local audiences. Engagement locally through panels and lectures enables me to discuss our water situation with audiences of diverse backgrounds and to suggest what individuals can do to be informed water stewards.

At statewide, regional, and national levels, in the first few months of 2025, I've engaged with many people working on groundwater, the invisible water resource vital to Arizona. The Arizona Department of Water

Resources' **Ag2Urban stakeholder discussions** are exploring development of a voluntary mechanism for converting agricultural water use to community water use. The National Institutes for Water Resources held a meeting in February, where I participated in discussions on groundwater matters, and, in mid-March, I participated in a Colorado State University symposium on groundwater. At that symposium, organized by former WRRC Research Analyst Jacob Petersen-Perlman, I shared information about Arizona's groundwater management accomplishments and some of our key data and management challenges. Given Arizona's lack of groundwater pumping measurement in many areas of the state, I expressed interest in learning more about the accuracy of alternatives to direct metering, such as Open ET. I also expressed interest in creating a community of practice around groundwater management policy to share information about what's worked and what hasn't worked.

At international and global levels, 2025 has already presented meaningful engagement opportunities. This February, I had the opportunity to visit Malta to learn about their water scarcity and management. There, I participated in a national conference convened by the Energy and Water Agency of Malta. The agency's CEO, Manuel Sapiano, invited me to share information on how communities in Arizona have approached water supply diversification and collaboration. At this one-day dialogue on *Non-Conventional Water Resources for Water Resilience*, I delivered a keynote speech, titled "Achieving Water Security and Resilience: Lessons from Arizona, USA." While there, I learned about their multi-faceted efforts to improve water resilience. Desalinated water is a critical water supply, and the agricultural sector is increasing its use of reclaimed water. As a member of the European Union, Malta must comply with EU water-related directives, including those related to river basin management planning, groundwater quality monitoring, and flooding. While Arizona and Malta are far apart geographically and have different topographies and water supplies, sharing practices and experiences in addressing water scarcity brings us together.

My second 2025 global engagement opportunity was being selected for membership in the new 18-person **Global Leadership Council** of the **Women in Water Diplomacy Network**. The Network, which includes male supporters, provides an informal and inclusive platform, particularly for those working in transboundary water settings. As an organization focused on sharing experiences, capacity building, and collaboration, its strategic pillars explicitly include research cooperation and peer-to-peer learning. I look forward to representing the United States on this international council and building upon the dynamic **launch of the North American section of the Network** at the 2023 Colorado River Water Users Association annual conference.

Opportunities to share information and insights internationally also include interactions with the media and students from abroad. In the first few months of 2025, I hosted PEER2PEER Fellow Anna Msigwa from Tanzania, discussed Arizona and Colorado River Basin issues with a delegation of journalists from Europe, met with a graduate student from Poland researching Navajo Nation water rights, and was interviewed by a Mexican television station. My involvement in the international **Kasser Joint Institute for Food, Water, and Energy Security** continues, along with my many interactions with students, media, and organizations closer to home.

World Water Day provides a perfect opportunity to note that the extensive year-round water resources work of the University of Arizona has been recognized by the **2024 Shanghai Ranking for Water Resources**. The U of A ranked #4 globally and #1 for US universities. The WRRC continuously strives to contribute to this work through applied research, education, and engagement programs. As always, we invite you to connect with us through our **WRRC Water Webinars** and the **WRRC 2025 Annual Conference**, *Shared Borders, Shared Waters: Working Together in Times of Scarcity*. For us, every day is Water Day!



**Land Acknowledgement**



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