



Public Policy Review

by Sharon Megdal

Summing Up: New Developments in State and WRRC Water Affairs



Worthy of note are some recent developments in water news and affairs, some with statewide significance and some of special importance here at the Water Resources Research Center.

On the state legislative front, many water related bills passed — despite the rain! Space will not allow a complete reporting on such actions; the reader can consult

www.azleg.state.az.us or the legislative report of the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association at www.amwua.org/legislative/legislative_summary.htm for more information.

Several important steps were taken to shore up the financial footing of the Arizona Department of Water Resources. Total ADWR appropriations for fiscal year 2006, which began July 1, are approximately 29 percent over the prior year's appropriations. The \$18.4 million budget includes an additional \$1.5 million in funding for rural studies, restoration of some past budget cuts, and \$1.2 million in new money allocated to ADWR's base budget.

In addition, HB 2174 authorized an Assured and Adequate Water Supply Administration Fund which will include fees received for performing reviews necessary for complying with the state's Assured and Adequate Water Supply Rules. This bill also calls for the ADWR director to review the rules and recommend rule and statutory changes to improve the efficiency of the program. HB 2277 requires public water systems to prepare supply, drought preparedness and conservation plans; thus implementing the key recommendation of the Governor's Drought Task Force. SB 1190 prohibits new exempt wells within 100 feet of the distribution system of a municipal water provider. Proponents of this bill have worked for several years with legislators to craft a bill to prohibit the drilling of a well in the middle of a fully-functioning service area. Wells can still be drilled under certain conditions. SB 1336 established a Rural Water Legislative Study Committee to review information regarding supply and demand in rural Arizona and to identify opportunities to develop alternative supplies and to reuse water. A 14-member committee will have until Dec. 31, 2006 to submit its report. This report is expected to lay the foundation for further discussions regarding water management in rural Arizona. More fine-tuning to the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District's replenishment reserve was accomplished via SB 1235. Finally, some Southern Arizona folks and others worked hard to gain approval of HB 2323. This bill allows tax credits of up to \$200 per house to home builders incorporating graywater systems and/or water harvesting systems. More information on graywater systems can be found at www.watercasa.org.

There has been a lot going on away from the Capitol building. In March, the long-awaited Upper San Pedro Basin Active Management Area Review Report was released. (It is available at the

ADWR web site, www.azwater.gov) ADWR Director Herb Guenther concluded that the region did not meet the statutory criteria for designating the basin as an Active Management Area, a conclusion that has been both applauded and criticized. He did, however, make several recommendations, including additional monitoring, modeling, conservation, and implementation of recharge programs. In late April, the recommendations of the Yuma Desalting Plant/Cienega de Santa Clara Workgroup were released. (See front-page feature and Guest View section of the newsletter for information about this noteworthy achievement.) Regarding the CAGRDR, the process for approval of the CAGRDR Plan of Operations, which is submitted every 10 years, is nearing completion. The document provides the CAGRDR's plans for meeting its rapidly growing replenishment obligations.

Some new ADWR leadership will be very busy with meeting existing and new statutory responsibilities. Karen Smith, formerly of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, recently joined ADWR as deputy director. Tom Carr was promoted to ADWR assistant director, Office of Statewide Conservation and Strategic Planning. Most recently, Director Herb Guenther announced the appointment of Sandy Fabritz-Whitney as assistant director for water management.

Here at the WRRC we have some changes to report. Kerry Schwartz, director of Arizona Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), has been promoted to area associate agent with Arizona Cooperative Extension, housed at the WRRC. Features of her statewide program include training teachers to integrate water curriculum into the classroom, developing K-12 water curriculum correlated to state educational standards, and extending the water festival program. Dana Flowers will continue her work for the University of Arizona Water Sustainability Program, with a particular focus on water education programs, in her new position as assistant agent with Maricopa County. Kristine Uhlman, who serves as Arizona NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials) program coordinator, is now affiliated with the WRRC. Her responsibilities for this educational outreach program focusing on land-use decision makers and nonpoint source pollution issues include working on needs assessments for watershed stakeholders and developing and implementing workshops and other outreach media. She will become an area assistant agent in November, 2006.

Last but certainly not least, Professor Aaron Wolf will be joining the UA Department of Geography and Regional Development in August 2006. He is to become the WRRC's associate director. Dr. Wolf is world-renown for his work on the interaction between water science and water policy, particularly as related to conflict and conflict resolution. We look forward to Aaron joining us; more information regarding his important work will be featured in future issues of the newsletter.

Congratulations to all for their accomplishments this spring! 🏡