



ARIZONA WATER RESOURCE

The Water Resources Research Center Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 26 Number 3 Summer 2018

Reflections on Change and Continuity in WRRC Outreach

by Sharon B. Megdal, Ph.D.

This is my 75th *Arizona Water Resource* (AWR) column since joining the WRRC in February 2002. When I interviewed for the Associate Director position, which I held until becoming Director in July 2004, I expressed interest in contributing a policy column to the newsletter on a regular basis. Over 16 years later, I am pleased to say that I have not missed an issue. It is also with somewhat mixed emotions that I am using this column to inform our readership that we will cease publishing the AWR with the Fall 2018 issue.

We transitioned from printing and mailing the newsletter to an all-digital format in 2017. While that saved some funds, publishing the newsletter on a quarterly basis continues to strain our resources. We started our Weekly Wave e-news digest about six years ago as a means of consolidating email announcements, particularly those about the WRRC annual conference and our sponsored seminars. The Weekly Wave, published as the bi-weekly Summer Wave during the University of Arizona's summer break, has evolved into a mechanism for us to share news as well as announcements in a more concise and flexible format, something more consistent with today's communications platforms.

During 2017, we at the WRRC took a look at how we deploy staff and student resources and engage with our varied stakeholders. Given resource constraints and the changing nature of how we receive and share information, we recommended to the WRRC External Advisory Committee that we discontinue the AWR. We also recommended that we use the Weekly Wave to carry some AWR features, such as occasional commentary from guest writers and my column. The WRRC External Advisory Committee, and others with whom we have shared our recommendations, concurred. Producing the Weekly Wave is truly a team effort. We look forward to continuing to communicate with our stakeholders and welcome your thoughts as to the Weekly Wave's content going forward. If you are not already a subscriber, please sign up at <https://wrrc.arizona.edu/subscribe>.

At the current time, we plan to continue the production of our annual *Arroyo* newsletter, which focuses on a single topic linked to our annual conference. The 2018 issue, *Water and Irrigated Agriculture in Arizona*, was published in May. With the hiring of a summer research intern, we are working on the 2019 issue based on our March 2018 conference, "The Business of Water". The current and past *Arroyo* issues can be found at <https://wrrc.arizona.edu/publications>.

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Our efforts to connect our stakeholders to up-to-date information and insights through seminars continue throughout the year. While we do tend to slow down over the summer, we have had the opportunity to schedule two seminars by international experts. The first was held on June 15 and featured Dr. Shafick Adams of South Africa's Water Research Commission. Dr. Adams' lecture on diversification of South Africa's water supplies under conditions of drought was well-attended and included strong on-line participation. The second seminar, on July 18, featured two experts from the Arava desert region of Israel. Their presentation on food, water, and energy in the Arava region included discussion of renewable energy deployment in this water-scarce region. We offer live streaming of our seminars and post recordings of them, subject to speaker permission. Information on our sponsored and co-sponsored seminars is shared via the Weekly Wave and can be found on our web page <https://wrrc.arizona.edu/brown-bag-seminars>.

The WRRC's annual signature outreach and engagement event is our conference. We are still working on the date and location of our 2019 conference. Our goal for the annual conference is to bring together varied insights and information on a topic of interest and importance to the State. Especially for those who have not attended recent conferences, I refer you to our conference web page, <https://wrrc.arizona.edu/conference>.

As you can tell, a key tool for engaging with our stakeholders is through the WRRC website <https://wrrc.arizona.edu>. We endeavor to keep our outreach and programmatic pages up to date and post reports, bulletins, and publications, subject to copyright restrictions. Also included among our postings are our annual reports and strategic plan metrics. We provide access under the Programs tab to extensive information on Arizona Project WET (<https://arizonawet.arizona.edu>), as well as our programs on water quality, groundwater, transboundary aquifer assessment, water harvesting, and water planning and research carried out in various locations across Arizona. We offer presentations on water resource related topics to diverse audiences throughout the year and, while we do not post them all, I am happy to share mine with you on request. My Curriculum Vitae, which can be found at <https://wrrc.arizona.edu/director>, lists my presentations.

We hope you have enjoyed reading the *Arizona Water Resource* over the years. Past issues can also be found on our website. Our final Fall 2018 issue will feature water news resources that have emerged in the last few years, a comment from an *Arizona Water Resource* founder, and a retrospective look at my columns. Regarding my columns, in recent years, I have asked the students in my Spring graduate class to read them and formulate questions as their first assignment. (For those with interest in enrolling, this class, Water Policy in Arizona and Semi-arid Regions meets weekly during the Spring semester on Friday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 at the WRRC.) In my final AWR column, I intend to highlight some of my favorite columns.

I do not want to pass up this opportunity, however, to mention a few of my past columns that relate to the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (LBDCP). Anyone who pays attention to the news will know that Arizona has recently renewed its public dialogue on how to approach LBDCP structure and implementation in Arizona. We have known for some time that Arizona would face cutbacks in deliveries of Colorado River water through the Central Arizona Project. In Fall 2013, I published the column entitled "Shortage Projections May Inspire Changes in Thinking". In the Winter 2014 issue, I discussed the talking points on Arizona's water achievements and challenges, which had been circulated in December at the Colorado River Water Users Association annual conference.



This electronic billboard concept from the Winter 2015 AWR Public Policy Review shows Lake Mead level as of January 2015. Source of bucket graphic: Central Arizona Project

Published a year later, the column, "15 Water Wishes for 2015", is one of my personal favorites. More than one of my wishes relates to Colorado River conditions and actions to take. Wish number four was "to explore developing an electronic billboard campaign that shows Lake Mead elevation levels and links to sources of information about what these levels mean for Central Arizona Project water deliveries. It could be an interesting way to engage the public." And wish number 10 was that "we determine our solution paths here in Arizona and throughout the Colorado River Basin before a crisis develops. It might take some event(s), however, such as a shortage declaration on the Colorado River, to interest the general public and spur action. Although we do know a shortage declaration is likely, even without one, Arizona will voluntarily use less Colorado River water over the next three years pursuant to the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding to leave water in Lake Mead with the hopes of forestalling a shortage declaration."

As always, I welcome your feedback via email (smegdal@email.arizona.edu), including any you might have on the billboard idea, which I still like! 🙏



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All of Dr. Megdal's Public Policy Columns are available here: <https://wrrc.arizona.edu/columns>