

# Arizona's Natural Systems

## Water for River Health

Sustainable Water  
Workgroup

[www.azwaterfuture.org](http://www.azwaterfuture.org)

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AZ Water Future

# Sustainable Water Workgroup

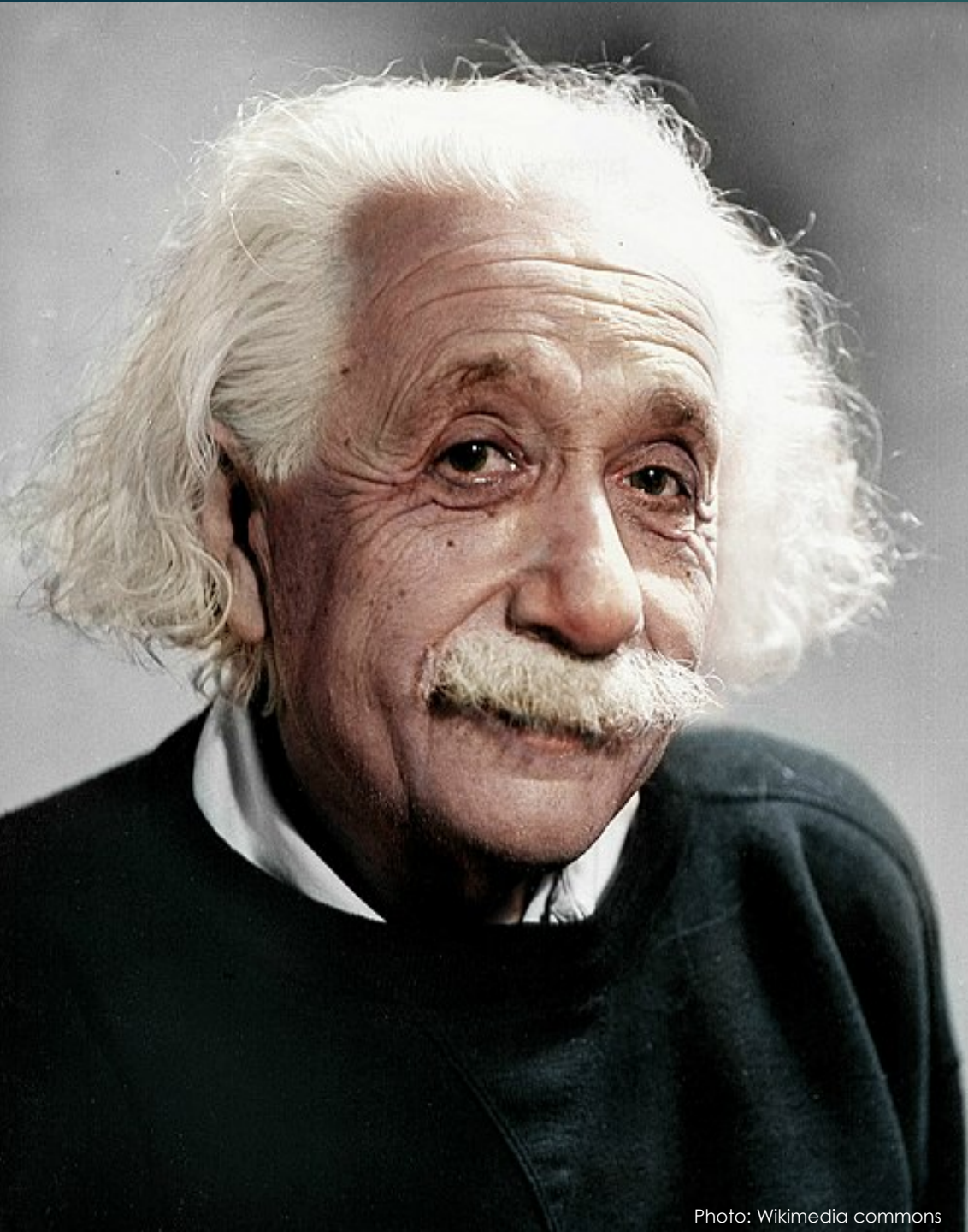
- ▶ Coalition of >30 environmental, community, conservation groups and individuals
- ▶ Looking for solutions to protect/restore our diminishing rivers, streams and springs and to balance AZ Water interests



AZ Water Future



Photo: Gary Beverly; otters in the Verde River



"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." Albert Einstein



Think differently about today's problems

Water laws created >100 years ago applicable today?

**Rivers are drying up  
Groundwater is being depleted**

# Groundwater is being depleted

Dry wells; land subsidence; drying rivers

Outside AMA's- no limits; no meters = no data

Proposed legislation to improve groundwater  
Laws - failed



## Surface water

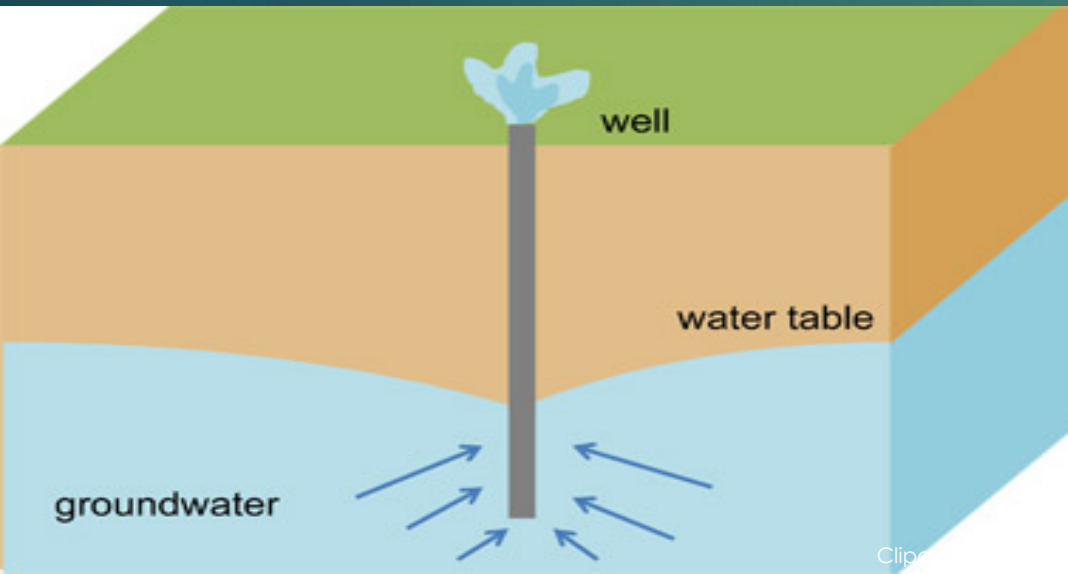
Water for rivers/environment was excluded from AZ water laws

Colorado River – less snow pack, less water  
(DCP; 2026 renegotiations)

Other rivers of the state – plan for them??

Ephemeral / Intermittent streams

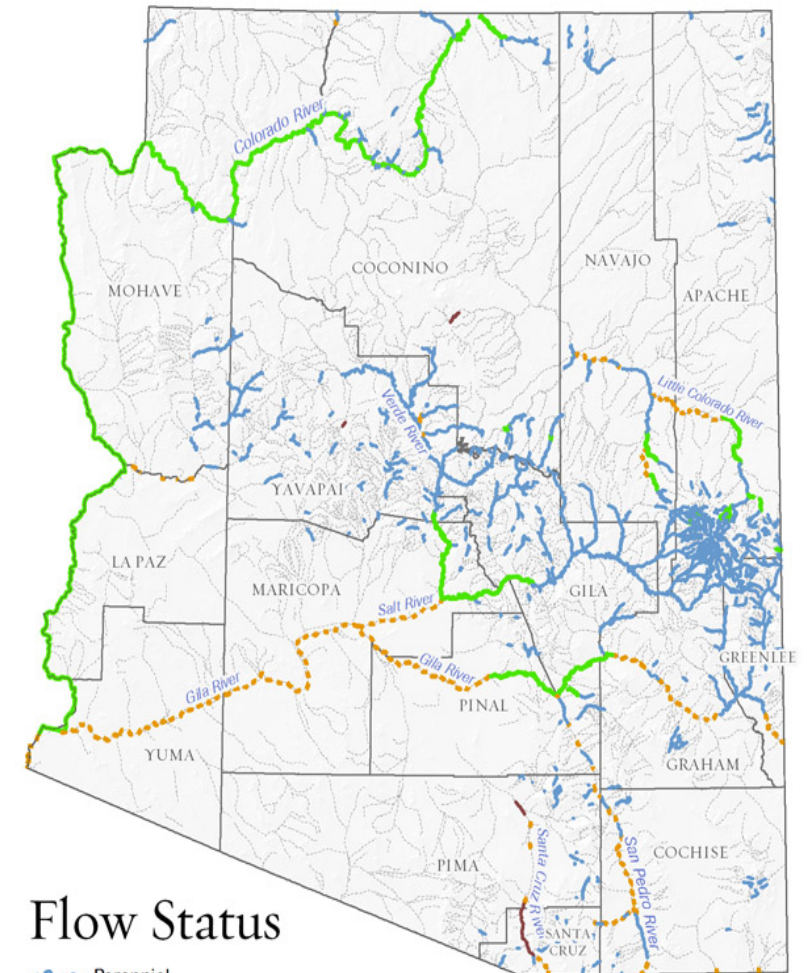
## Groundwater



# Rivers are drying up

## Studies / discussions of environmental water

- ▶ **Water Resources Development Commission 2011**  
(Brenda Burman, Chair)
- ▶ **“The Forgotten Sector: AZ Water Law and the Environment”**  
2011 (Megdal et al)
- ▶ **Arizona Environmental Water Needs Assessment 2012**  
(WRRC)
- ▶ **AZ Roadmap for Considering Water for AZ’s Natural Areas**  
2014 (WRRC)
- ▶ **Desert Waters International Symposium 4/19**  
(Sky Island Alliance; WRRC)
- ▶ **Sustainable Water Workgroup – People’s Public Hearings**  
(2017, 2018)



### Flow Status

- Perennial
- Formerly Perennial
- Regulated
- Effluent Dominated (May Be Formerly Perennial)
- Intermittent or Ephemeral



Flow status data created from TNC Freshwater Assessment, available from [azconservation.org](http://azconservation.org)

**“Four Ways to Ensure Long-Term Water Security in the West”**  
**Ted Kowalski 10/24/19 (Walton Family Foundation)**

▶ “We need to place a higher priority on protecting and acknowledging the environment. The health of the river itself is critically important – and the river should not have to settle for the leftovers in water-use negotiations. **We must consider the environmental health of the river to be as important as the needs for hydro power or agricultural and municipal uses.**”

▶ **Stockholm Water Prize (2019) – Dr. Jackie King**

- ▶ Research - on “river ecosystems and the natural structures depending on healthy rivers”  
E-flows are vital to sound water management
- ▶ “Dr King has helped decision-makers understand **that healthy river ecosystems are not a luxury, but the basis for sustainable development.**”  
SIWI’s Executive Director Torgny Holmgren

## Proposed bills – “Conserved water”

- ▶ **SB1465** – Dalessandro: Bradley, Gonzales, Steele
- ▶ **HB2758** – Engel: Campbell, Cobb, Gabaldon, Rodriguez
  - ▶ **Allow conserved water as a beneficial use (conserved water stays in river)**
    - ▶ **Retain right’s priority date**
    - ▶ **Water right not subject to forfeiture**
  - ▶ **Require ADWR to survey health of watersheds; ecological water needs**
- ▶ **HB2675** – Griffin: Bowers, Dunn, Nutt
  - ▶ **Water right holder files a conservation plan; water rights not subject to abandonment claims**

# Water for healthy, flowing rivers is NOT “just for the environment”

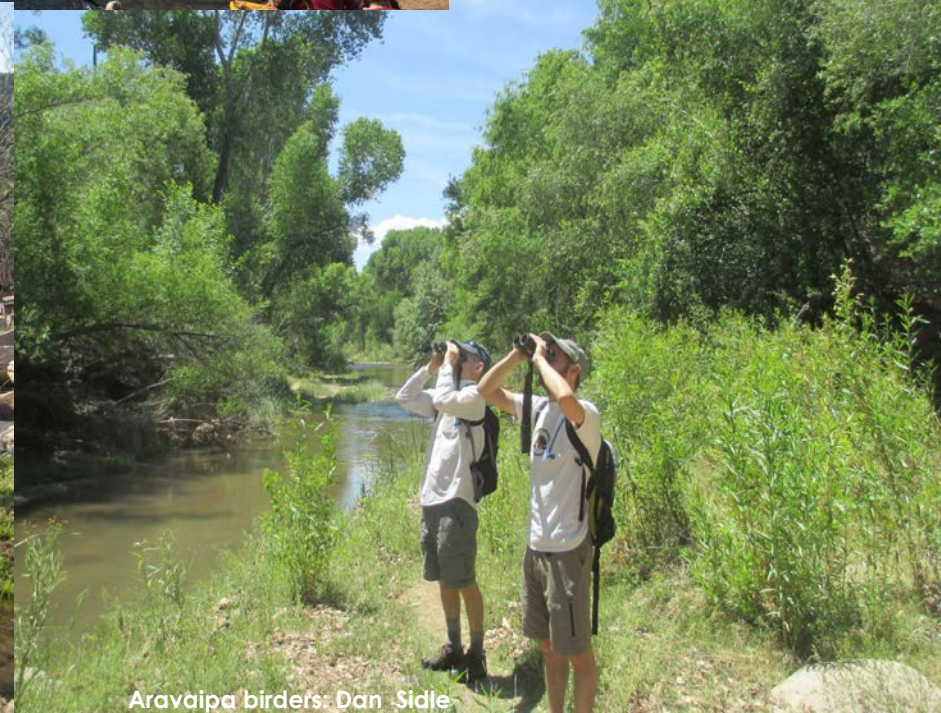
\*Outdoor water-related activities  
**\$7.1 billion** to the state’s GDP

Hiking, kayaking, fishing, picnicking

**Provides goods and services:**

- human uses
- wildlife, aquatic life
- ecosystem services

**Cultural, spiritual, health benefits,  
community aspects**





# “The Responsibility of Knowing” (10X Water Summit, Houston)”

## Water decision-making tables:

- Include water for healthy rivers
- More voices
- Public input

## Revise laws:

- Allow for more options
- More resiliency

Rivers belong to all  
Arizonans and should be  
protected for ALL



Wikimedia commons



Photo: Janarie Kay Remelli, wikimedia commons



Photo: Sandy Bahf



**"No problem can  
be solved from the  
same level of  
consciousness  
that created it."**

Albert Einstein

**Think boldly  
Think holistically  
Change Now**

**To better protect what's  
left and allow rivers to  
exist**