

Emerging Policy Issues: Water Quality in Rural AZ

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A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the slide, consisting of several concentric circles of varying sizes and opacities, resembling ripples on water. The circles are light blue and fade out towards the bottom right corner.

Water Quality Issues

Water Quality and Land Use are inextricably intertwined.

Land Uses in rural Arizona are changing.

Federal and State Policies impact land uses in rural Arizona.

Policy Issues Affecting Rural Water Quality

Energy Policies: reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear energy, either in the past or currently.

Current Trends: Increased interest in coal-fired and nuclear power plants = increased interest in uranium and coal mining in rural AZ.

Resulting Water Quality Issues

Use of ground water to slurry coal,
Navajo Aquifer and proposed
Coconino Aquifer

Uranium contamination plumes: Tuba
City/Moenkopi & Monument Valley

Use of ground water to cool power
plants – Joseph City

Policy Issues, continued

Budget Policies: Realignment of budget priorities toward international interests.

Current Trends: decreased funding of BIA and activities on Tribal Lands, decreased funding to rural communities for water studies and clean up, new water systems, etc.

Resulting Water Quality Issues

Aging, Failing or Substandard Water Treatment Facilities: Munds Park, Tuba City, Kachina

Inability to clean up contaminated sites: Tuba City

Good news: Rural Water Development Fund Bill approved and signed by Governor

Other Issues Affecting Rural Water Quality

“The economy, stupid!” (Clinton campaign)

Rural economies are tourism dependent.

The more the urbanized areas grow, the more the rural areas become desired for ‘escape’.

Impacts to Water Quality

Use of surface water resources for recreation may conflict with needs for local residents.

Some recreational uses are beginning to cause water quality issues: golf courses, motorized boats.

Increased growth in second home communities adds to burdens on aging treatment plants, or adds to numbers of septic systems in use.

Growth in rural northern Arizona is primarily fueled by second home ownership.

And the BIG ONE: Climate Change

Is it global warming or just a 'normal' long term Southwestern drought?

Does it matter? The impacts are the same! Only the forecast differs...

Impacts of Changing Climate

Depletion of surface water supplies:
Navajo Mtn., Colorado River

Increased reliance on ground water
supplies: 2005 summer drought

Watersheds are unhealthy.



Watershed impacts


Bark beetle outbreaks and other biological forces stressing forested areas.

Unhealthy forests combined with drought conditions fueling catastrophic wildfires – resulting in on-going water quality issues.

If climate conditions continue, will biozones shift? What is the impact to watersheds of a shift from forest to chaparral? From chaparral to grasslands? Grasslands to desert?

Policy Question

How can we empower local communities or rural counties across Arizona so that they can participate in shaping the policies that affect water quality?

The background of the slide features a blue gradient with several faint, concentric circular ripples, resembling water droplets, scattered across the lower half of the page.