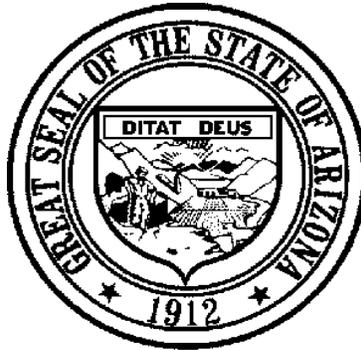


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Janet Napolitano
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NEWS RELEASE

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ADWR: AMA NOT NEEDED IN UPPER SAN PEDRO

Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Herb Guenther has determined the Upper San Pedro Basin will not be declared an Active Management Area (AMA).

According to state law, the director may propose to designate an AMA if any of the following criteria are met: 1) active management practices are necessary to preserve the existing supply of groundwater for future needs; 2) land subsidence or fissuring is endangering property or potential groundwater storage capacity; and 3) use of groundwater is resulting in actual or threatened water quality degradation.

The director based his determination on findings that there are sufficient groundwater supplies in the Basin to meet future municipal, agricultural, and industrial needs. In addition, there is no evidence of land subsidence or fissuring, or that groundwater use is resulting in water quality degradation in the Basin.

In 2001, ADWR initiated a study of the Upper San Pedro Basin to review changes that have occurred since 1988, when ADWR completed its first review of the Basin and determined that creation of an AMA was not warranted.

Since the previous review there has been considerable local, environmental, state and federal interest in growth and water resources, and concern about the health of the San Pedro River. In addition, there has been considerable hydrologic research in the Basin, particularly in the Sierra Vista area. The Department initiated a public outreach effort, including presentations in both Benson and Sierra Vista and periodic newsletters, in conjunction with the AMA review.

The review includes a groundwater budget for 2002 and a water demand and supply budget for selected years between 1985 and 2030. The statute requires evaluation of the entire groundwater Basin, but ADWR also provided data for two "informal" Basin divisions, the Sierra Vista sub-area and the Benson sub-area. Some of the key findings were:

- There are 20 to 26 million acre-feet of groundwater in storage.
- The Fort Huachuca/Sierra Vista cone of depression is deepening, but at a slower rate than was found in the past.
- Groundwater overdraft in the Basin is approximately 9,500 acre-feet/year.

- There appears to be very little groundwater change adjacent to the San Pedro River.
- Agricultural demand decreased by 45% between 1985 and 2002. About 23% of the agricultural demand is met by diverting San Pedro River water.
- Municipal demand is the largest water use sector. Municipal water use increased by 5,000 acre-feet between 1985 and 2002 as population increased. About 30% of municipal demand is satisfied from domestic wells.
- Total demand in 2002 was 31,100 acre-feet, and is projected to reach 40,000 acre-feet in 2030.
- There is no evidence of land subsidence in the Basin.
- Although there are some localized areas of water contamination, the use of groundwater is not causing groundwater quality degradation in the Basin.

Although the director has determined that the statutory criteria have not been satisfied, the Department has included in its review a number of recommendations that are intended to provide water management tools for the future. These recommendations include:

- On-going groundwater level measurements in the Basin.
- Additional research on natural recharge, riparian use and on the hydrology of the Benson sub-area.
- Cooperation with local partners to facilitate water management planning efforts.
- Encouragement for local watershed groups to investigate alternative sources of water supplies, and
- A recommendation that ADWR and local stakeholders should explore water management options including well metering and reporting, well spacing criteria to provide hydrologic benefits, and legislative changes necessary to facilitate water management efforts.