

Arizona Department of Water Resources

New Management Area: Background, History and Key Elements



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Groundwater Conservation Area Background Willcox Basin

- Spring 2014; initial reports to ADWR of declining water levels and wells going dry in Willcox Basin
- In September 2014 public meeting organized by state legislative representatives; ADWR was asked to present known hydrologic conditions
- Public demanded action and assistance from elected officials and ADWR
- As a result ADWR: established a web-portal to report dry wells and completed a well measurement sweep of the Basin



Groundwater Conservation Area Background Willcox Basin

- In September and October 2014 ADWR was invited to several different community groups to explain the currently available water management tools in Arizona law (AMA & INA)
- Most groups recognized the poor fit of existing tools to the Willcox area.
- Late October 2014 multiple community groups coalesced into a smaller “Willcox Working Group” with representatives from the major water use sectors in the Basin
- ADWR was invited to assist this group to ensure proposals would fit in general GW code framework, be administratively compatible with ADWR’s structure, and have minimal regulatory burden



Groundwater Conservation Area Basic Structure

- Minimize regulatory footprint
- Encourage conservation (all water use sectors); voluntary BMP program
- Limits but does not eliminate new groundwater uses
- Freezes large irrigation, but is divorced from the “tied to acres” model of the AMA/INA; field shapes can change as long as no increase in total acres or decrease in efficiency
- Allows portability with increased efficiency (Type-3)
- Type-3 may be used for any type of use and from any type of well
- Allows for limited addition of new low water-duty, highly efficient crop irrigation
- Protects existing GW users with well impact reviews



Groundwater Conservation Area Basic Structure

- Withdrawal Authorities required; exempt wells supporting exempt uses withdrawal authorities not required
- Withdrawal Authorities: meter & reporting requirements; use fee per AF
- Exempt uses: 35 gpm or less; stock, domestic, commercial and watering less than 2 acres; less than 10 af/yr
- Exempt uses: no meter; no reporting; no use fee
- New wells: impact review including 35 gpm or less wells used for irrigation and withdrawal authorities transferred more than 10 miles; exempt wells for exempt uses no impact review.



Groundwater Conservation Area Willcox Basin: Update & Next Steps

- September 2, 2015 Willcox Working Group met and presented concept to elected state representatives and selected statewide water policy experts
- Next Steps:
 - Willcox Working Group will conduct a series of public meetings in the Willcox Basin for feedback
 - Willcox Working Group will bring it to interested statewide parties for feedback



QUESTIONS?

