

# 2015 Colorado River Shortage Messaging

## Main Message:

Arizona and its water users are prepared for potential shortages on the Colorado River which may occur as early as 2016, although more likely in 2017. With the exception of a potential increase in Central Arizona Project (CAP) water rates, Arizona's cities, towns, industries, mines and tribes using CAP water are not expected to be impacted by shortage during the next five years. A shortage in that timeframe will eliminate CAP water supplies to the Arizona Water Banking Authority, a portion of the CAP water supply for groundwater replenishment, will impact agricultural users in central Arizona and may cause an increase in CAP water rates. A near-term shortage will not mean that Arizona is in a water crisis. Arizona is prepared to address the challenges of Colorado River shortage. We are continuing to take proactive measures to protect Arizona's Colorado River users from the impacts of potential shortages in the coming years by working cooperatively with the United States and the Basin States to address these risks.

## Talking Points:

- The Colorado River, which supplies roughly 40 percent of our total statewide water uses, has a significant possibility of shortage in 2016 and a strong likelihood to have supply shortages declared by 2017.
- With the exception of a potential increase in CAP water rates, Arizona cities and tribes using CAP water will not see a reduction in their Colorado River supplies. In the Yuma area, municipalities, industrial users and agricultural water users also will not be impacted.
- CAP has junior priority on the river and a shortage in the near-term will discontinue excess underground water storage and reduce the amount of CAP water delivered to agricultural water users in central Arizona.
- In the face of potential shortage, farmers in central Arizona may choose to offset reductions in their CAP supply by using local supplies including pumping groundwater.
- These conditions are not unexpected. Arizona has been proactively building resilience and implementing innovative water management strategies to secure dependable water supplies.
- Arizona's innovative water management programs and collaborative long-term planning allows water providers and private entities to store additional water supplies underground to reduce their vulnerability to shortage on the Colorado River.
- With mandatory conservation requirements for most water users and the requirement for all water providers to develop drought plans, Arizona has set precedent with rigorous water conservation and sustainability laws that protect Arizona water users.
- Arizona leads the nation in implementing water recycling and reuse programs. More than 95% of treated wastewater generated within central Arizona serves beneficial uses including agriculture, municipal, groundwater recharge, power generation, industrial, and golf-course irrigation.
- CAP has invested more than \$275 million dollars to improve the reliability of CAP water through underground storage, water conservation and water efficiency projects. These investments will reduce the impacts of shortage on Arizona cities, towns and tribes served by CAP.
- More than two times the amount (3.2 million acre-feet/more than a trillion gallons) of Colorado River water delivered to central Arizona annually has been stored underground by the Arizona Water Banking Authority and CAP in order to provide back-up supplies for cities, industries and tribes in times of shortage on the Colorado River. CAP, ADWR, and AWBA have planned to recover and deliver these supplies should the need arise.
- The Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) and CAP are taking proactive steps to address the risk of Colorado River shortages and improve the health of the river system by working in collaboration with the Colorado River Basin States, federal government, Mexico and local and regional partners, including Yuma agricultural and on-river municipal water users, in water resource management. Collaboration is focused on reducing the near-term risks caused by the on-going drought as well as addressing the long-term imbalance between supply and demands on the Colorado River system. Recent actions include agreements with water users in California, Nevada, and Arizona to conserve Colorado River water to reduce the risk of shortage in the near-term.
- All states and water users need to develop innovative solutions that include cooperation, new investments, and shared sacrifice to improve the long-term reliability of the Colorado River System.

## For more information:

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