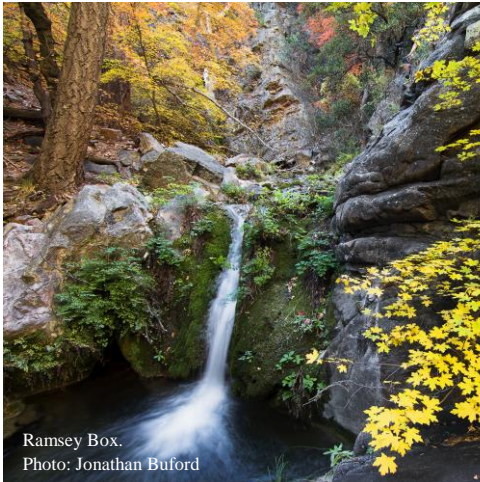


Western Rivers Action Network

Protecting rivers across the Colorado River Basin



Ramsey Box.
Photo: Jonathan Buford



Aravaipa Creek.
Photo: Jonathan Buford



San Pedro River
Photo: Steve Prager

Arizona's Groundwater

- 41 percent of Arizona's water use comes from groundwater. 38 percent of Arizona's water use from the Colorado River, 18 percent from in-state rivers (such as the Salt and Verde), and 3 percent from high-quality treated wastewater (often called reclaimed water or effluent).
- Due to rapid groundwater level declines in the 1960s and 1970s, plus the threat that Arizona would not get its federal authorization to build the Central Arizona Project, Arizona passed a forward-thinking measure, the **Groundwater Management Act**, in 1980.
- Since then, the state has regulated the use of groundwater in specific geographies called Active Management Areas (AMAs).
- There are five AMAs—Prescott, Phoenix, Pinal, Tucson, and Santa Cruz—and within these boundaries there are specific rules on how cities, agriculture, industry, and individuals can use groundwater.

Key Points: Groundwater Management Act

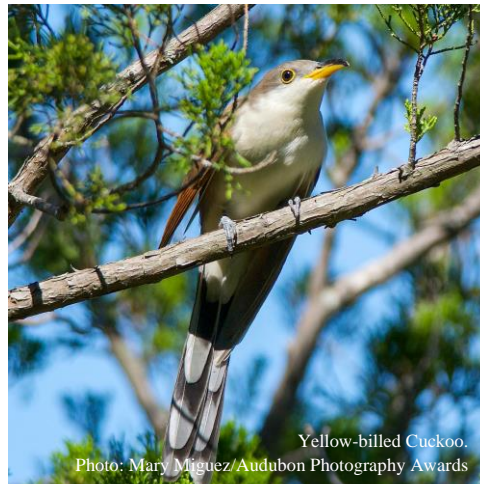
- More than 75 percent of Arizonans live within an Active Management Area, which have groundwater use protections.
- The Groundwater Management Act, when it passed in 1980, mandated conservation from all sectors (agricultural, industrial, and municipal) leading to a trend that continues today: declining per person water use.
- For cities within an AMA, any water that is pumped out must be put back (or recharged) into the ground.
- Outside of AMAs, there are few restrictions on groundwater use, consumer protections are weak, and significant problems are emerging. There are limited legal tools for local communities to prevent new large groundwater pumpers from coming in and negatively affecting existing wells.

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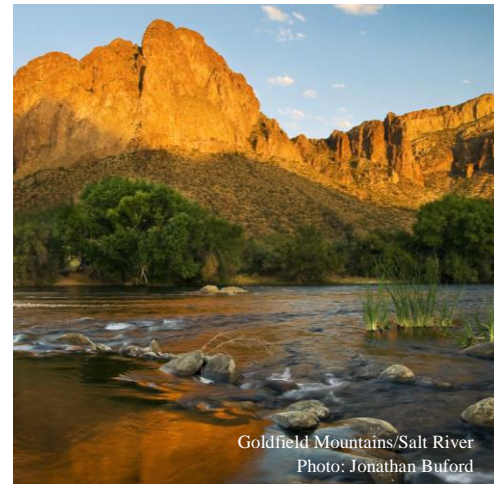
Protecting rivers across the Colorado River Basin



Havasupai
Photo: Jim & Robin Winters



Yellow-billed Cuckoo.
Photo: Mary Miguez/Audubon Photography Awards



Goldfield Mountains/Salt River
Photo: Jonathan Buford

Threats to Arizona's Groundwater

- Overpumping of groundwater can result in the drying up of wells, less water in streams and rivers, decreasing water quality, and land subsidence (the land sinks).
- Iconic rivers critical to birds, such as the San Pedro and the Verde, rely on groundwater contributions to sustain their flows. Yet Arizona water law does not adequately recognize the hydrologic connection between groundwater and surface water.
- Attempts to weaken the Adequate Water Supply program—the amendment that gives counties the authority to require proof of 100-years' worth of water for new development's outside of AMAs
- Failure to adequately fund the Arizona Department of Water Resources

Keys to Sustainable Groundwater Management

- Supporting and strengthening the Groundwater Management Act of 1980
- Properly funding the Arizona Department of Water Resources
- Statewide, science-based, long-term water planning
- Creative, flexible, and responsive policies that balance water demands with available supplies
- Encouraging conservation, reuse, and efficiency
- Collaboration across all water sectors, users, and stakeholders

Additional Resources:

- [The Arizona Groundwater Management Act of 1980](http://www.azwater.gov/AzDWR/WaterManagement/documents/Groundwater_Code.pdf) - http://www.azwater.gov/AzDWR/WaterManagement/documents/Groundwater_Code.pdf
- [10 Things You Should Know about the Groundwater Management Act](https://www.audubon.org/news/10-things-you-should-know-about-arizonas-groundwater-management-act) - <https://www.audubon.org/news/10-things-you-should-know-about-arizonas-groundwater-management-act>