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RESOLUTION NO. 2023-17

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CALLING ON THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA, THE ARIZONA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND THE ARIZONA SENATE TO PROVIDE
WATER CERTAINTY TO RURAL ARIZONA BY PASSING LEGISLATION TO
ENABLE LOCAL GROUNDWATER STEWARDSHIP AREAS**

WHEREAS, the Counties of Coconino, La Paz, Mohave, and Yavapai have joined together to advocate for the adoption of balanced and necessary groundwater policy in rural Arizona; and

WHEREAS, the Boards of Supervisors of the Counties of Coconino, La Paz, Mohave, and Yavapai collectively represent the interests of approximately 625,000 rural Arizonans according to official U.S. Census population figures; and

WHEREAS, the month of April was designated as 'Water Awareness Month' in the State of Arizona by Governor Napolitano in 2008; and

WHEREAS, Governor Katie Hobbs signed a proclamation on April 1, 2023, in support of Water Awareness Month; and

WHEREAS, the Groundwater Management Act was passed over 42 years ago in 1980, to conserve, protect, and allocate the use of the finite groundwater resources of the State of Arizona; and

WHEREAS, at the time the Act was considered necessary and urgent to protect and stabilize the public health, safety and welfare and the general economy of the State of Arizona and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, since 1980 the Act has emphasized balanced and efficient groundwater usage among water users from all sectors within the areas of Arizona covered by the active management areas; and

WHEREAS, the certainty in water planning created in the areas of Arizona covered by the active management areas has aided Arizona in becoming one of the fastest growing states and highly attractive for economic development, while protecting finite groundwater resources for future generations; and

WHEREAS, business and industry are more reluctant to invest within rural areas of Arizona where groundwater certainty and security for planning are absent; and

WHEREAS, in some non-AMA areas of Arizona, the absence of balanced and region-specific groundwater management tools has resulted in the over-pumping of finite groundwater supplies, depletion of municipal groundwater supplies, rapid recorded declines in wells, land subsidence, and threats to the flows in certain rivers, streams, and springs; and

WHEREAS, many non-AMA rural areas and their citizens are either primarily or completely dependent upon finite groundwater for their drinking water and for their economic development and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, Arizona Revised Statute § 45-412(A) allows the Arizona Department of Water Resources Director to establish new Active Management Areas to preserve the existing supply of groundwater for the future needs of Arizona residents; and

WHEREAS, Arizona Revised Statute § 45-412(C) requires the Arizona Department of Water Resources Director to “periodically review all areas which are not included within an active management area to determine whether such areas meet any of the criteria for active management areas;” and

WHEREAS, Arizona Revised Statute § 45-432 allows the Arizona Department of Water Resources Director to establish a Subsequent Irrigation Non-Expansion Area if there is insufficient groundwater to provide for a reasonably safe supply for irrigation of the cultivated lands in the area at the current rates of withdrawal and the basin does not qualify for an Active Management Area; and

WHEREAS, water security is a top three issue of concern for Arizona residents regardless of rural or urban residence or political affiliation, and 73% of likely Arizona voters today support expansion of tools towards balanced, commonsense and regionally-specific groundwater regulation within rural Arizona; and

WHEREAS, 90% of Arizonans in 2023 have indicated an urgency for the State of Arizona to provide rural water certainty and security; and

WHEREAS, rural groundwater legislation has been proposed during every legislative session since 2017 but has never been provided the courtesy of even one public Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee hearing in either the House or the Senate; and

WHEREAS, rural groundwater legislation has been proposed during the current legislative session to allow counties to create Local Groundwater Stewardship Areas (LGSAs) in partnership with ADWR in certain basins and subbasins and to authorize LGSA councils to develop plans to conserve, protect, and manage finite groundwater resources according to regional voter-approved General Plans and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The Coconino County Board of Supervisors hereby request that the Honorable Governor Katie Hobbs, members of the Arizona House of Representatives, and members of the Arizona Senate, finally provide water certainty for planning to rural Arizona by passing legislation on Local Groundwater Stewardship Areas in the 2023 legislative session.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 25th day of April 2023.

AYES: 5
NOS: 0
ABSENT: 0

COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS


(SEAL)





Patrice Horstman, Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



for Monique Coady, Deputy County Attorney

ATTEST:



Lindsay Daley, Clerk of the Board