ARIZONA WATER SYMPOSIUM 2015: BUILDING PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

Monday July 27th, 2015
Flagstaff, Arizona
OVERVIEW

- Colorado River and Western Drought Challenges
- Increasing Water Storage Projects and Solutions
  - Bureau of Reclamation Transparency Act
  - Bill Williams Water Rights Settlement Act
  - Blocking Federal Water Grabs
  - Tamarisk Problem
  - Active Forest Management
COLORADO RIVER WATER SUPPLY

Status of Possible Colorado River shortage:
- Risk for a shortage for 2016 dropped significantly
- Result of May rainstorms and record setting precipitation

Projected forecast for Lake Mead water elevation in 2016:
- over 6 feet above the shortage trigger of 1,075 feet

Bureau of Reclamation will make a formal declaration of water supply conditions for next year in August
COLORADO RIVER WATER SUPPLY

What a shortage would mean to the Central Arizona Project & Arizona?

- Still a significant possibility in 2017 and in future years despite improved numbers
- CAP and Arizona are hit the hardest by any reductions
- CAP could see up to a 320,000 Acre-Feet reduction and other Arizona water users could lose an additional 32,000 Acre-feet
- The shortage reductions triggered by the water elevation at Lake Mead are allocated into 3 tiers
The Colorado River Basin

How the water is apportioned, in millions of acre-feet per year:

- California: 4.4
- Colorado: 3.9
- Arizona: 2.85
- Utah: 1.7
- Wyoming: 1
- New Mexico: 0.85
- Nevada: 0.3

Sources: USGS, Southern Nevada Water Authority

Lou Spirito / @latimesgraphics
COLORADO RIVER & ARIZONA

- Approximately 40 million people in 7 different states rely on the Colorado River.
- Current demand in the state of Arizona requires use of about 7 million Acre-feet of water/year.
- Projected population increases, drought and other factors will prevent the Colorado from meeting future demands if we don’t have a strategic vision.
COLORADO RIVER & ARIZONA

- Arizona in a better position than most as it prepared for the drought and has an excellent foundation

- The Groundwater Management Act of 1980
  - Reclaimed groundwater
  - Protected aquifers
  - Incentivized conservation

- Later amended to allow for the storage of underground water which has benefitted Arizona by adding 9 million Acre-feet of water to our aquifers

This was a tough fight but passage of this law in 1980 has yielded significant benefits
HISTORIC DROUGHT CONDITIONS

- Western states and the Colorado River watershed have experienced 16 straight years of drought conditions
- This has exacerbated water challenges as well as threatened the livelihoods of farmers, tribes and local communities
INCREASING WATER STORAGE & WESTERN DROUGHT SOLUTIONS

- May 1, 2015: House passes three Gosar amendments
- Prevents removal of any federally-owned or operated dams
- Increases Corps of Engineers Construction and Investigations budgets
- Reduces the backlog of Army Corps of Engineers’ projects
In 2008 BOR testified that the agency’s maintenance backlog was $3.2 billion.

BOR failed to provide adequate information and details on this backlog to Congress.

My bill requires BOR to take inventory of assets and prioritize major repairs necessary at the agency’s facilities.
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
TRANSPARENCY ACT

- Allows for meaningful steps to be taken to address the maintenance backlog
- Will ensure an abundant supply of clean water and power for future generations

23 Bipartisan cosponsors
Hearings have been held in the House and Senate
THE BILL WILLIAMS WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENT ACT

- Facilitates settlement of claims within the Bill Williams River Watershed
- Sustains 4,000 good-paying jobs
- Overall net water use reduction in the basin of nearly 30,000 acre-feet/year

Good for private property owners,
Good for local economies
LOWER SANTA CRUZ RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT

- Army Corps of Engineers authorized work plans:
  - $200,000 for the Lower Santa Cruz River Watershed Project in Pinal County in fiscal year 2014
  - $700,000 for the Lower Santa Cruz River Watershed Project in Pinal County in fiscal year 2016
  - $1.6 million for the Rio de Flag flood control project in Flagstaff in fiscal year 2014
PROPOSED EPA WATER RULE
(WATERS OF THE U.S.)

EPA overreach: Expands the Clean Water Act and
seizes control of our water resources

- Unilateral regulation that directly contradicts prior
  Supreme Court decisions
- Will harm agriculture, small businesses, property
  owners, municipalities and water users throughout
  the country.

Arizonans can’t afford more economic
hurdles and thieveries of precious
water resources
DOING EVERYTHING I CAN TO FIGHT WOTUS

- 5.1.14 Letter to EPA, withdraw the rule
- 6.2.14 Field hearing in Phoenix, 9 witnesses
- 1.28.15, introduced the Waters of the United States Regulatory Overreach Protection Act
- 5.12.15 House passes legislation blocking rule
- 7.7.15 Gosar WOTUS rider in two appropriations bills

I also defeated an amendment to strip it

Only Congress has the authority to change the CWA... NOT bureaucrats in DC
U.S. FOREST SERVICE WITHDRAWS OVERREACHING GROUNDWATER DIRECTIVE

- Would have allowed Forest Service’s control over groundwater resources traditionally managed by states and private ownership
- Forest Service permanently withdraw the Proposed Directive in April as a result of Congressional pressure
- Water grabs threaten successful relationships and private water rights
TAMARISK PROBLEM

- An invasive and non-native plant
- Causes major economic losses in agriculture and forestry as well as negatively impacts ecological integrity
- Located primarily throughout Southwest
WATER USAGE

Up to 200 gallons per day, per plant

The Thirsty Tree
Confronting Invasive Salt Cedar in the American Southwest
EXPLORING PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

Held Multiple Invasive Species Roundtables to heighten awareness and discuss best practices for combating the tamarisk problem

- The City of Yuma has shown real promise and plans to remove 1,400 acres of water-guzzling tamarisks
- More than 400 acres have been completed to date
ACTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Good for the Environment, Leads to Healthier Forests, Good for Watersheds

- Active forest management reduces greenhouse gas emissions and increase water yields
- Crown fires cause significant damage to watersheds reducing the rate at which the ground can absorb water absorption rates making soil “hydrophobic”

One catastrophic wildfire can emit more carbon emissions than total vehicle emissions in an entire state over the course of a year
FOUR FOREST RESTORATION INITIATIVE
We’ve had some setbacks...
- 10-year contract proposed to clear 30,000 acres/year
- To date, less than 4,000 acres have been cleared
4FRI RESTORATION INITIATIVE

4FRI will yield critical benefits to watersheds and for Arizona’s water supply... If we ever get going...

- If the goals of the 10 year contract are met:
  - water yield is expected to increase 8,700-26,500 acre-feet/year

- As a result of these treatments, water yield is expected to increase 7%-21% overall

This increase will predominantly benefit the Verde Watershed
QUESTIONS

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