

May 7, 2024

Honorable Governor Katie Hobbs
Members of the Legislature
1700 W. Washington St. Arizona State Capitol Complex
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: Let's Find Workable Groundwater Solutions for Rural Arizona

Dear Governor Hobbs and Members of the Legislature,

We are all residents of the Willcox Basin or neighbors within Cochise County who depend on the groundwater here to sustain our lives and our homes. We write to ask you to address the serious groundwater challenges we face here by first disposing of Senate Bill 1221, an unworkable and unreasonable "non-solution", a proposal that would actually be a hindrance to resolving our dire groundwater challenges in Cochise County.

The Willcox groundwater basin is the "poster child" for Arizona's rural groundwater crisis, with an overdraft of more than 3 times the natural recharge as identified in a recent Arizona Department of Water Resources Supply and Demand Study. As of 2018, the average depth to water has dropped below the average well depth – resulting in tremendous hardship for many rural residents.

Some homeowners might be able to afford to deepen their wells at significant cost. But for others, the money has run out. Many now have to haul water to their homes at a much higher monthly expense. Many have lost property value and we have watched friends move away because they lost their water supply. All of this comes from extreme, unfettered over-pumping without any groundwater protections to speak of.

For years, we have pleaded for meaningful groundwater tools that protect our property while supplying water for responsible agricultural growers in our community. Legislators from both parties have introduced workable bills throughout the years. And yet, those bills were never heard in committee. Instead, we are here today because of a different bill—SB1221—a bill that is not supported by rural Arizonans because it will not help folks like us in the Willcox Basin and other rural basins with high overdrafts. Instead it dooms us to continued depletion of our only water source.

The bill is littered with policy, substance and implementation issues. Here are just a few of those problems:

1. The requirements to create a Basin Management Area (BMA) include unreasonable hydrological thresholds, an ambiguous cost benefit analysis, and unanimous Board of Supervisors votes that are likely to block any rural groundwater basin from actually creating a BMA. In the case of the Willcox Basin the Boards of Supervisors from both Cochise and Graham Counties would both have to approve a BMA with unanimous votes..
2. A BMA establishes a certificate of water rights for current users coupled with a system of water debits and credits with no metering requirements or public disclosure – a sure recipe for fraud and

abuse. To make matters worse these water credits can be sold to the highest bidder potentially exposing our community to an even greater risk of groundwater speculation.

3. SB1221 does nothing to ensure that new and replacement well locations do not harm other users or harm the aquifer.
4. The only opportunity to actually reduce the groundwater overdraft in a BMA is through the establishment of an Active Basin Management Area but this step could only happen in the Willcox Basin after unanimous votes from the Boards of Supervisors from both Cochise and Graham Counties followed by an election of eligible voters. Even in the unlikely case where an Active Basin Management Area is created, SB1221 requires any groundwater management decisions, including reductions in groundwater pumping, be approved through unanimous agreement of the five member Active BMA Council. The unanimous vote requirement is likely to result in little or no meaningful action.
5. SB1221 would give outsiders a veto over decisions in Active Basin Management Councils by requiring unanimous votes and letting irrigation districts outside of the Willcox Basin appoint council members. An outside irrigation district is not appropriate to be the decider of our water future.
6. SB1221 requires that any required reductions in groundwater pumping be capped at 10% over the lifetime of the BMA. In the Willcox Basin, the average depth to water is already greater than the average well depth. A 10% reduction will not even move the needle on our overdraft.
7. Addressing the current overdraft here will take a sustained long term effort over many decades but SB1221 would make a long term steady and sustained plan nearly impossible to implement. Under the bill an active BMA would be terminated after 10 years unless the Active BMA Council votes unanimously to call another election and voters approve the continuation. If continuation is not approved, any required irrigation reductions will be terminated and likely the overdraft only gets worse.

It's frustrating that such a flawed proposal as SB1221 continues to move through the legislative process when other more reasonable proposals have never been granted a hearing over the past four years. We believe that SB1221 is such a problematic piece of legislation that it needs to be stopped or vetoed and that a serious dialogue toward a better solution must move forward.

It is time for our political leaders to set aside partisan differences, come together, and address the serious groundwater challenges across rural Arizona. The need is urgent – our water future depends on your actions today!

Respectfully submitted by the following 176 Willcox Basin Residents and 37 Cochise County neighbors,

Steve Kisiel, Pearce,AZ	John Graffio, Pearce, AZ
Lucia Kisiel, Pearce, AZ	Edward Clutter, Pearce, AZ
Sandy Fino, Pearce, AZ	Kay Clutter, Pearce, AZ
Robert Fino, Pearce, AZ	Chris Brinkmeyer, Willcox, AZ
Teresa Weisser, Willcox,AZ	Victoria Brand, Pearce, AZ
Michael Weisser, Willcox, AZ	Jeffrey Brand, Pearce, AZ
Mark Jorve, Willcox, AZ	Gerald A. Beckwith, Pearce, AZ
Rhona MacMillan, Willcox, AZ	James A. Verner, Pearce, AZ
Deborah Hawk, Cochise, AZ	Maria Rosa Andrade Torres Verner, Pearce, AZ

Cheryl Knott, Pearce, AZ	Jessica Dilworth, Pearce, AZ
Karen Bogner, Pearce, AZ	Elaine Santo, Pearce, AZ
Andrew Lang, Pearce, AZ	Glenn Klingler, Cochise, AZ
Katherine Brown, Cochise, AZ	Martha Klingler, Cochise, AZ
Terrence Kleber, Pearce, AZ	Denise Greene, Pearce, AZ
Dianne Kleber, Pearce, AZ	Gayle Colopy, Pearce, AZ
Debra Warner, Pearce, AZ	Karen Sartain, Pearce, AZ
Jessica Jones, Pearce, AZ	Jeff Sartain, Pearce, AZ
Lynn Engstrom, Cochise, AZ	Lou Manuta, Pearce, AZ
Moirra Hagerlin, Pearce, AZ	Janet Manuta, Pearce, AZ
Vince Hagerlin, Pearce, AZ	James E. Syme, Pearce, AZ
Lisa Glenn, Willcox, AZ	Cindi Mapes, Pearce, AZ
Lloyd Glenn, Willcox, AZ	Mary Ford, Dragoon, AZ
Mark LeVine, Willcox, AZ	Stuart Carter, Willcox, AZ
Laurette LeVine, Willcox, AZ	Sarah K. Carter, Willcox, AZ
Tracy Caras, Dragoon, AZ	Dave Middleton, Pearce, AZ
Pete Caras, Dragoon, AZ	Deanna Pihl, Pearce, AZ
Anneke Mayer, Dragoon, AZ	Mark Spencer, Pearce, AZ
Lowell Neff, Dragoon, AZ	Stefanie Spencer, Pearce, AZ
Marc Boutte, Dragoon, AZ	Judy Bernard, Pearce, AZ
Ron Wendelin, Dragoon, AZ	Jeff Bernard, Pearce, AZ
Becky Heckman, Dragoon, AZ	Tom Spierings, Pearce, AZ
Greg Freeman, Pearce, AZ	Angela Rossman, Pearce, AZ
John Arbuthnot, Willcox, AZ	Damon Bostrom, Pearce, AZ
Ellen Cohen, Dragoon, AZ	Dan Clark, Dragoon, AZ
Mike Hensley, Dragoon, AZ	Mary Alice Clark, Dragoon, AZ
Sharon K. Arthur, Pearce, AZ	Jeanie Mudd, Pearce, AZ
Dave Buchanan, Pearce, AZ	Joanna Seeley, Pearce, AZ
Donna Schmelzla, Willcox, AZ	Gregor Caughey, Pearce, AZ
Irbie Wylie, Cochise, AZ	Megan Gesell, Cochise, AZ
Ekan Thomason, Dragoon, AZ	Scott Gesell, Cochise, AZ
Gary Frank Brown, Pearce, AZ	Aimee Myers, Pearce, AZ
Donna Fields Brown, Pearce, AZ	Melinda Kate Brooks, Willcox, AZ
Kathryn Maddox, Pearce, AZ	Jim Domini, Dragoon, AZ
Angela Goodacre, Dragoon, AZ	Johnny Fleischman, Cochise, AZ
John Miller, Dragoon, AZ	Michael J. Drougas, Pearce, AZ
Paul Runner, Pearce, AZ	Susan Drougas, Pearce, AZ
Kathy Shopa, Willcox, AZ	Justin Horn, Pearce, AZ
Michael Shopa, Willcox, AZ	Danielle Horn, Pearce, AZ
Eric Kaldahl, Dragoon, AZ	Jeff Owens, Dragoon, AZ
Tricia Messinger, Cochise, AZ	Michael T. Buck, Cochise, AZ
Eric L. Messinger, Cochise, AZ	Kaylene, Buck, Cochise, AZ
Gary Sands, Dragoon, AZ	Tammy Stansberry, Willcox, AZ
Sherry Sands, Dragoon, AZ	Jessica Helene Stanley, Cochise, AZ
Fred W. Skillman, Cochise, AZ	William James McElroy, Cochise, AZ
Carol M. Skillman, Cochise, AZ	Joanne Wiener, Cochise, AZ
Robin Peterson, Pearce, AZ	Timothy G. Austin, Cochise, AZ

Berta Margarita Acosta, Cochise, AZ	Pat Vicario, Pearce, AZ
Patty Sacco, Pearce, AZ	Jeanie Vicario, Pearce, AZ
Dan Sacco, Pearce, AZ	JoAnne P. Richardson, Pearce, AZ
Sam Klein, Pearce, AZ	Kent Andrew Shaver, Willcox, AZ
Caila Block, Peace, AZ	Nora Jean Shaver, Willcox, AZ
Michael Nelson, Willcox, AZ	Shannon Brown, Willcox, AZ
Carrie Jones, Pearce, AZ	Johna Ward, Pearce, AZ
Jason Jones, Pearce, AZ	Traci Page, Pearce, AZ
Rona Baker, Pearce, AZ	Robert W. Weston, Cochise, AZ
Gary Baker, Pearce, AZ	Judith P. Weston, Cochise, AZ
Ioanna Dactu, Pearce, AZ	Janna Clark, Pearce, AZ
Stanford Collins, Pearce, AZ	Carol J. Lukensmeyer, Pearce, AZ
Karla F. Nelson, Willcox, AZ	Tina M. Samples-Ewer, Dragoon, AZ
Leon R. Nelson, Willcox, AZ	Karen Weilacher, Cochise, AZ
Greg Stotts, Pearce, AZ	Sharon Hill, Willcox, AZ
Claudia Lunden, Cochise, AZ	Michael Hubbard, Willcox, AZ
Joan Edelman, Willcox, AZ	Kari Daniels, Pearce, AZ
Lisa Kramme, Willcox, AZ	Kay Nelson, Willcox, AZ
Janet Randall, Willcox, AZ	Glenna Brooks, Willcox, AZ
Loren Herring, Willcox, AZ	Jeff Haozous, Cochise, AZ
Deborah Herring, Willcox, AZ	Susan Houser, Cochise, AZ
Melanie Lawrence, Cochise, AZ	James A. Kelley, Cochise, AZ
James Zachary Jones, Pearce, AZ	Jody Telfair Richards, Pearce, AZ
Lora Chiehowsky, Pearce, AZ	Janice E. Henning, Pearce, AZ
Luke Zachary Jones Chiehowsky, Pearce, AZ	Carol Osgrove, Pearce, AZ
Robert B. Young, Pearce, AZ	William Bates, Willcox, AZ
Joni Nomides, Pearce, AZ	Vance Williams, Pearce, AZ
Alexis Nomides, Pearce, AZ	Billie Jo Cross, Pearce, AZ
Mary Ford, Dragoon, AZ	Joy Jaqua, Pearce, AZ
Gary L. Taylor, Willcox, AZ	Maria P. Taylor, Willcox, AZ
Robert Maxwell Jarrett, Willcox, AZ	Mary Jo Riley, Cochise, AZ
Lenora M. Setterstedt-Jarrett, Willcox, AZ	Jeff Riley, Cochise, AZ

Cochise County Neighbors Supporting the Willcox Basin

Harry Wolters, Bisbee, AZ	Hunter Mann, Douglas, AZ
Michael Gregory, McNeal, AZ	Diana LaMar, Douglas, AZ
Steve Helffrich, Douglas, AZ	M. Barbara Batey, McNeal, AZ
Alice Hamers, McNeal, AZ	Andrew Walter, Benson, AZ
Allison Morse, Portal, AZ	Jim Liston, Benson, AZ
Dirk Sigler, Portal, AZ	Kris Liston, Benson, AZ
Joy Banks, Huachuca City, AZ	Jeanette L. Reeves, Benson, AZ
Summer Walter, Benson, AZ	Terry L. Reeves, Benson, AZ
Lynn Gray, McNeal, AZ	Tricia Gerrodette, Sierra Vista, AZ
Jerome Gray, McNeal, AZ	Mieko Hara Brown, Douglas, AZ
David Ivan Clark, Douglas, AZ	Wawaise Schmidt, Douglas, AZ

Mark Schmidt, McNeal, AZ	Lawana Diffie, Douglas, AZ
Conrad M. Spencer, Benson, AZ	Crystal K. Spencer, Benson, AZ
Paul Hirt, Portal, AZ	Linda Jackson, Portal, AZ
Kim Vicariu, Portal, AZ	Jeffrey A. Wakefield, Portal, AZ
Susanne Apitz, Portal, AZ	Helen Andrus Snyder, Portal, AZ
Noel Friedrich Ralph Snyder, Portal, AZ	Leroy Dyal III, Portal, AZ
Bob Karp, Sierra Vista, AZ	Cinthia Beeman, St. David, AZ
Raechel Running, Bisbee, AZ	