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“Finally, we are being heard” - Arizona Department of Water Resources takes welcome step toward designating the Willcox Groundwater Basin an Active Management Area.

From Cochise Groundwater Stewards (cochisegroundwaterstewards@gmail.com)

Willcox, Arizona - Today the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) announced the agency will hold a [formal hearing on November 22nd](#) to consider designating the Willcox Groundwater Basin an Active Management Area (AMA). This hearing follows [ADWR's sobering September 26 presentation](#) to the community, detailing the alarming decline of finite groundwater supplies – our *only* water supply.

All of us in the Willcox Basin depend on groundwater to sustain our lives and our homes. Our basin is the “poster child” for Arizona’s rural groundwater crisis - with an [overdraft of more than three times the natural recharge](#) and, as of 2018, the average depth to water dropped below the average well depth. This has resulted in tremendous hardship for many residents.

Vance Williams, resident in the Sunizona area, said, ***“I am grateful that ADWR has finally decided to take the first step toward establishing an AMA to protect the groundwater in the Willcox basin. I just wish it had happened sooner as my well in Sunizona went dry in 2020 and I have heard from many other neighbors across the basin whose wells have gone dry. My home is within five miles of the Riverview Turkey Creek dairy feedlot and over fifty center pivots. The AMA will stop any new large agricultural operations from moving into our area while also putting a halt to expansion of existing irrigation. I am hopeful that the AMA will also reduce current pumping levels, a necessary step needed to save our aquifer. Thank you to Governor Hobbs and her staff for working to protect the groundwater in the Willcox Basin.”***

For over 10 years, Willcox residents and stakeholders have sought groundwater management solutions, but each year the Arizona Legislature ignores us. A handful of [legislators like Rep. Gail Griffin](#) routinely block solutions for rural communities like ours. All the while our water supplies deteriorate - and more people and families are hurt. Enough is enough.

Lisa Glenn, who has lived in the Willcox area with her husband, Lloyd for 57 years, said, ***“For years, we’ve pleaded for groundwater management that protects our property, our families, and our economy. Legislators from both parties have introduced workable bills throughout the last five years – none received a hearing. With the Legislature apparently abandoning us in rural Arizona, it’s time for ADWR to designate a new AMA here. Finally, we are being heard.”***

Cheryl Knott, a resident of the Pearce area for over 25 years said, ***“A lot of us in the Willcox basin have been sounding the alarm about groundwater depletion for years. We cannot allow the deliberate undermining of rural groundwater protection and inaction by our Legislature to be the last word. The ADWR Director’s action today moving to designate an AMA here is truly historic. Because of this step, I have hope for our communities, and for the future generations that will call this beautiful valley home.”***

[Cochise Groundwater Stewards](#) is a community organization dedicated to creating sustainable water policy for the Sulphur Springs Valley in Cochise County. We are local residents working to create a strong network of well-informed neighbors committed to working together to assure the preservation of our precious groundwater. [Access to background materials on our efforts to protect our groundwater supplies.](#)