

2007 Regional Water Symposium, 20th Annual AHS Symposium:

Sustainable Water, Unlimited Growth, Quality of Life: Can We Have It All?

Session 2B Arizona Water Policy Issues:

Central Arizona Project Water Supply – Do We Have Enough Through 2040?

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The Central Arizona Project (CAP) provides renewable Colorado River water supplies to municipal and industrial (M&I), Native American, and agricultural water users in its three county service area of Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima County. CAP water is served to over 4 million people and provides water for over 200,000 acres of irrigated farmland throughout the three county area. The delivery of CAP water has substantially reduced reliance on non-renewable groundwater resources in central Arizona. However, the CAP water supply has one of the lowest priorities for Colorado River uses. Therefore, CAP could be subject to shortages when Colorado River water supplies are reduced. Understanding the magnitude and impact of potential shortages of CAP water to its customers is an important component of evaluating sustained growth and development in central Arizona.

Analysis of potential Colorado River water supplies, CAP water demands, and available CAP underground storage through 2040 suggests that M&I priority water users will likely be insulated from reductions in CAP water deliveries through the time period. While there is a limited possibility of reductions of CAP water sufficient to reduce the amount of water available to M&I water users, the availability of underground storage for recovery and use will mitigate potential impacts. Estimates show that the CAP will provide a highly reliable water supply to M&I users including Native American communities. However, agricultural uses may suffer significant reductions in CAP water supplies before 2040. In addition, excess CAP water customers, such as the Arizona Water Banking Authority and the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District could also suffer reductions in CAP water supplies before 2040.