

# From the desk of Supervisor Jean Bishop

---

## **PRESERVING OUR WATER SUPPLY**

Water continues to be a top priority all over the state. The Legislature enacted and the Governor signed in January of 2019 the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan found in Senate Joint Resolution 1001 and Senate Bill 1227, as well as House Bill 2467, a historic water bill to study Mohave County's groundwater levels this year.

HB2467 establishes a 10-member Mohave County West Basin Water Users Study Committee to analyze groundwater withdrawal data for the Hualapai Valley Basin and Sacramento Valley Basin, and make recommendations to the Governor, Legislature and the Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) on programs and policies for those basins by December 31, 2021.

Last year in 2018 our Board of Supervisors and Mohave County Legislators worked to study our Counties groundwater basins at risk. At our urging, the legislature appropriated in Senate Bill 1525 \$100,000 to ADWR that is being spent right now for the purposes of retaining an independent consultant to estimate: 1) the rate of groundwater depletion in the Northwest basins planning area; and 2) the number of years of groundwater remaining in the basin. ADWR is required to submit the independent consultant's report to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the Senate and Governor Ducey by December 31, 2019. That report is being written and will be available for public review later in 2019.

It is probably true more today than ever here in Mohave County, "Whiskey is for drinkin' and Water is for fightin'."

Two main water issues here in Mohave County are, "The raid by Central Arizona interests on our Colorado River Water" and, "The Risk of Depletion of some Mohave County groundwater basins, primarily caused by unprecedented increases in Agricultural Uses".

Mohave County is addressing both water issues. Early in 2017, Mohave County signed an agreement for Government Affairs and Related Services with the lobbyist firm of High Ground Public Affairs Consultants, in conjunction with Sheryl Sweeney and the Law Firm of Ryley Carlock & Applewhite to represent Mohave County in our Colorado River and Groundwater issues.

We have testified multiple times at the Legislature, written letters, passed resolutions, attended stakeholder meetings, held town halls, met with Legislators and met with the Governor's Office. We continue to work with the City of Kingman Mayor and Council, and our local cattlemen and Natural Resource Conservation Service on local solutions. These efforts have resulted in the passing of SB 1525 in 2018, HB 2467 in 2019 and of

course the passage of the Drought Contingency Plan in two bills in January of 2019 that make dramatic steps toward protecting Lake Mead in our County (SJR 1001 and SB 1227).

On the local level the County has already begun work to construct infiltration basins that will control flooding and benefit the Hualapai Valley Basin – one of our groundwater basins at risk. These rapid infiltration basins will cut a hole through the clay layer and allow water to soak through the underlying sand layer to relieve future flooding and to benefit the basin.

We continue our work with the USGS, ADWR and the Legislature’s independent consultant to better define the conditions and status of our aquifers. I continue to be engaged and looking for ways to improve and protect our water supply. The County and City of Kingman have jointly funded a USGS study of the Hualapai Valley Basin, and that work is ongoing.

The Board of Supervisors intend to use this information to consider recommending to the Legislature a new designation of groundwater basins at risk: “Rural Groundwater Management Area.” Such a designation will help to develop local goals and objectives, and to identify and achieve “best management practices” for agricultural, industrial, municipal and domestic uses so that we can be better stewards of our limited groundwater resources for all users.

I look forward to assessing conditions and developing solutions for Mohave County’s Colorado River and Groundwater issues, for the sake of our future, to allow us to grow and prosper, and to control our own destiny.