

## **Talk of the Town: Countywide water management a must**

**By PAUL GLAVES, Special to the Courier Jun 19, 2024**

As the newest board member of the Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG), I am humbled by the challenges we face in Yavapai County regarding management of our water – both quantity and quality. I have been told that county leaders in the past have effectively said that based on current Arizona water law and regulations, they have no role to play in managing water.

CWAG believes that this attitude can and must change. Like most rural Arizona counties, Yavapai County has limited authority for water management. But the Board of Supervisors has many options that have yet to be tried. The board's inaction creates an increasingly painful problem for those homeowners in unincorporated areas around Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley whose wells have failed. The only choices for these homeowners are to hope for a miracle and drill a deeper well or begin hauling water. Both options are expensive.

The time for the municipalities in Yavapai County to come together to develop a regional water plan has come. The recently approved Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan Update 2032 calls for reinstating the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) to address resource management among many other worthy suggestions. Conservation alone will not resolve our water supply issues, but it is an essential part of the solution. Currently, the county has no effective water conservation programs. Although we all share the same groundwater supply, there is zero cooperation to protect our aquifers and many viable strategies remain untried.

The Big Chino aquifer is viewed by some as the next source of drinking water for Prescott and Prescott Valley. However, the Big Chino supplies 80% of the base flow of the upper Verde River, which is already declining. Exporting water from the Big Chino risks degrading the river into a dead, dry wash, ruining the finest remaining riparian area in the state.

Will the supervisors comply with the new Comprehensive Plan? CWAG hopes all voting citizens will attend our online forums to hear what ideas the candidates have on how to address and manage the water demands in the future. We must insist our elected officials engage in developing solutions to ensure our water supply and water quality are maintained for future generations. We must elect supervisors who understand what needs to be done.

CWAG is once again holding forums for candidates for the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors. The issues that will be discussed at each candidate forum later this month will cover the following water focus areas: regional planning, county resource management, conservation, protecting the Verde River base flow, and managing demand in the Big Chino Valley.

We should all Vote for Water. The candidate forums will help us to choose wisely. The forums will be held via Zoom on June 28 and June 29. You can find more information and a link to register under “Next Event” and “Current Issues” at [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org)

*Paul Glaves is a Prescott resident, a recent addition to the CWAG board and a retired chemical engineer.*