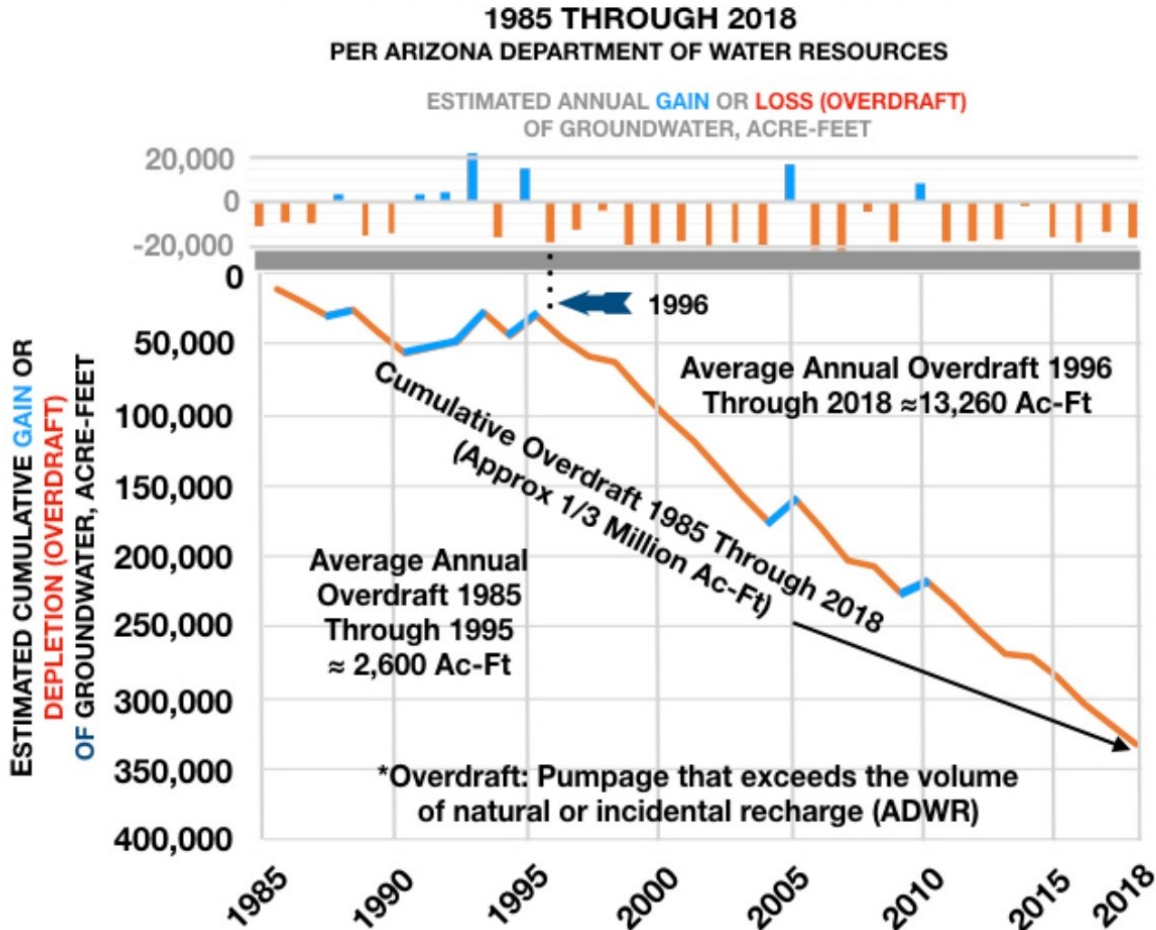


Talk of the Town: A better way to ask about our water supply

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Arizona Department of Water Resources/Courtesy

Gordon Bond Special to the Courier

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The Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG), as a water sustainability organization, is often asked how long our water supply will last. Unfortunately, that's a question scientists cannot answer. Yet many of our government officials provide unsupported, rosy predictions that take attention away from the real issue, which is the threat to the sustainability of our future water supply.

Scientists cannot accurately predict how long our water will last because geological and hydrological conditions in the Little Chino and Agua Fria aquifers (where our water comes from) are not adequately known. Also, everyone will not run out of water at the same time.

While municipal water supplies are sufficient for the near future, an increasing number of family wells on the western edges of the Little Chino aquifer are running out of water right now.

What scientists do know is that we are dependent on the groundwater in our aquifers and, for decades, we have been pumping more than is being replenished.

This situation is called overdraft and is not sustainable. For example, the 2018 groundwater overdraft was equivalent to a football field flooded to a depth of 3-1/2 miles.

The effects of the overdraft are more than a reduction in water levels in our wells. The negative environmental consequences of draining the aquifers include the loss of springs, such as Del Rio Springs, and a reduction in the base flow of the upper Verde River.

Instead of being cautious, many local officials are pursuing water management policies that will deny water to future generations. Each new house increases the overdraft, no matter how efficient water use is inside and outside the house.

Current water management policies are based on groundwater pumping legally permitted by the Arizona Department of Water Resources. Our government officials appear to be only concerned with what is legally permitted regardless of the negative long-term impacts on our aquifers.

In summary, here is the threat to a sustainable water future: We don't know what the available water supply is. We are now in overdraft of our aquifers. And government water policies support increases to the overdraft.

It is time for our officials to acknowledge the reality that more and more citizens in the Prescott Active Management Area between Dewey and north Chino Valley will face a future water shortage as water levels continue to decrease.

It is up to citizens to decide what future they want for their children and grandchildren. Write or call mayors and council members and members of the Board of Supervisors.

At election time vote for candidates who demonstrate a desire for a sustainable water future.

Please submit your questions or comments to info@cwagaz.org. Learn more about our region's water issues at www.cwagaz.org.

Gordon Bond is co-chair of CWAG's education committee and a retired business consultant.

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