

## **Talk of the Town: A secure water future? — How we are being misled**

JEAN MOTTA AND GORDON BOND, Special to the Daily Courier  
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In the Quad-Cities region, many business and government leaders are misleading the public into believing we have a secure water future. The reality is that, under current policies, a sustainable water future is nowhere in sight. Our regional elected officials must change current water management policies that are the main cause of this situation.

FIRST, IT IS MISLEADING ... for anyone to say how long the water in our aquifer will last. Both the future demand for water and the retrievable supply cannot be estimated with any degree of accuracy.

Anyone who says that they know how long our water will last must have quite the crystal ball to guess how many houses and other buildings will be built in the decades ahead. And their crystal ball must also guess how deep wells will have to go and how many costly new wells will be needed to supply this unknown number of buildings.

SECOND, IT IS MISLEADING ... to say that current water laws and regulations ensure that new developments don't harm our water supply. Yes, our officials have followed all laws and regulations. Yet, the result has been that we currently pump many times the volume of groundwater that is being replenished to our aquifer by natural and artificial recharge methods. If current trends of growth and pumping continue, the annual reduction in our water supply — called the overdraft — can only increase.

Prescott and Prescott Valley follow the law. But every year, each contributes to the overdraft by pumping over a billion gallons more groundwater than the volume of its wastewater recharge. And each is committing to supply new developments totaling thousands of new houses.

Although state law was intended to protect the aquifer, it contains major loopholes and exceptions that are the legal basis for supplying groundwater to new developments. In addition, Prescott and Prescott Valley have continued to let developers set the pace for growth.

THIRD, IT IS MISLEADING ... to say that the importation of water through the Big Chino pipeline would help secure a sustainable water future for our region. The proposed pipeline would not solve the ongoing overdraft problem and it would further harm the year-round flow of the upper Verde River.

The volume of water that could be delivered from the Big Chino aquifer is roughly equivalent to 60% of the current overdraft in the region, so it cannot solve the overdraft. Worse, Prescott and Prescott Valley intend to use the water for growth rather than helping the aquifer.

Through its outflow to Verde Springs, the Big Chino aquifer is the main source of groundwater that supports the year-round flow of the first 25 miles of the Verde River. Annual pipeline pumping of over 8,000 acre-feet (2.6 billion gallons) of Big Chino water is unsustainable and would nearly eliminate the perennial flow of the upper Verde.

To recap, we are being misled to believe that we have a sustainable water future. What's undeniable is that the water level in our region's aquifer is falling. As the water level falls, we face more and more failing wells, declining water quality, and degraded springs and streams.

Demand that your elected officials face the facts and change their water policies to achieve a secure water future for generations to come. Learn more on Oct. 9 at a Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) Zoom Webinar on our critical water issues. Register under "Next Meeting" at [www.cwagaz.org](http://www.cwagaz.org).

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