

Lane: Clean water – everyone can help

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Talk of the Town

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What's in the bottles and cans in your garage, or under your kitchen sink? Would you like to drink their contents? In the current drought we tend to focus on water quantity, which we don't control, and ignore water quality which we do, or at least should, control.

Improper waste disposal affects our water and financial resources. Statewide, the Arizona Department of Water Quality (ADEQ) website www.azdeq.gov/wpd describes numerous extensive, and expensive, programs to deal with past mistakes.

Water pollution is a local issue as well. As reported on the ADEQ website <https://azdeq.gov/miller-valley-road-and-hillside-avenue>, the chlorinated solvents tetrachloroethene and trichloroethene were found in groundwater near the intersection of Miller Valley Road and Hillside Avenue. Two nearby private irrigation wells are also reported to be impacted. The contamination extent is currently being investigated. And as reported by The Daily Courier on April 18, 2018, the City of Prescott is undertaking a multiyear investigation of Watson Lake water quality and options to improve the situation.

These and other water quality problems result from past events, and our options are limited. The real challenge is clean water for the future.

What can we do?

1 - Use common sense. Many of us live in the Upper Granite Creek Watershed. Whatever washes off from our yards and onto our streets, including dog waste, ends up in Watson or Willow lakes. Household wastewater is recharged into the aquifer. The City of Prescott reports that last year 3,146 acre feet of treated wastewater was recharged. Wastewater treatment and natural attenuation have limits to their effectiveness.

2 - Become informed. Visit the City of Prescott website www.prescott-az.gov/documents/ which contains much information on proper handling of our waste stream. The content under "Water & Sewer," and "Services & Safety" is particularly useful.

3 - Participate in your community's household hazardous waste (HHW) collection program. The City of Prescott reports that 14 tons of HHW has been collected so far this year. Although a small fraction of the total waste stream, hazardous waste is extremely important.

For example, only one gallon of gasoline or oil can contaminate a million gallons of groundwater.

To those who may ask why we should act, I offer two reasons:

1 - Watson Lake. The Granite Dells have been described as the crown jewel of Prescott. I would add that Watson Lake is the crown jewel of the Granite Dells. How many pictures of the Dells have you seen without Watson Lake? A clean lake is a gift to this and to future generations.

2 - A sustainable water future. Communities in arid regions are increasingly utilizing treated and recharged wastewater to serve growing populations. Future generations may well thank us for their water supplies, even if those supplies include our wastewater. More importantly, they will really thank us for what we did not put down the drain.

On Aug. 4, the Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) will host a Legislative District 1 water issues candidate forum. Details at www.cwagaz.org.

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