

# Talk of the town: New water polices speed growth

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New water policies proposed by the City of Prescott leadership will speed growth, provide water outside of the city without annexation, and increase the overdraft. These new policies depend on “paper water” created by diverting the Groundwater Allowance to new development.

The city’s new conservation and landscape policies are a step in the right direction for sensible water management. However, the Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) has seven pages of serious concerns about other proposed new policies (see [www.cwagaz.org](http://www.cwagaz.org)).

The Groundwater Allowance is paper water created when the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) declared the Prescott Active Management Area to be in overdraft in 1999. This step activated the Assured Water Supply Rules that prohibit the use of groundwater for new subdivisions. In order to provide groundwater to existing water customers and unbuilt lots as of 1999, ADWR calculated a Groundwater Allowance for Prescott.

CWAG believes this allocation was established to be used only on built and unbuilt lots created as of 1999. In fact, Prescott City Council agreed when it approved its “Calendar Year 2018 Water Management Policy” with Resolution No. 4411-1620 stating that the groundwater allowance “. . . is not a resource that can be allocated by the city.”

Suddenly, that changed when consultant Herb Dishlip recommended that the city change the policy and allocate the unused groundwater allowance to new development. This would give the city enough paper water to support tens of thousands of new homes. The city has provided no legal rationale and no impact study to justify this major change in policy. This change was not announced in study sessions and was not included in the formal draft policies.

CWAG believes this interpretation is inconsistent with the management plan for the Prescott Active Management Area, with the intent of the Arizona Groundwater Management Act, and with the Assured Water Supply Rules.

The city’s proposed new water policies, if adopted, will promote growth and development in the region for the next 80 years and beyond. These policies will also allow the city to supply additional water outside the city limits without annexation. And most seriously, the

increased overdraft resulting from the proposed policies will accelerate the depletion of our aquifer.

Although the new policies were developed without public input, the city is now holding public open house meetings to explain the proposed new policies and codes. CWAG encourages citizens to attend these meetings and to submit their personal comments. Details are at <http://www.prescott-az.gov/prescott-water-policy-public-meetings/> .

On Saturday, Sept. 14, from 10 a.m. to noon, CWAG will discuss the proposed policies and codes as well as questions the audience submitted at CWAG's Aug. 3 Prescott Council Candidate Forum. Details are at [www.cwagaz.org](http://www.cwagaz.org).

*Gary Beverly is president of the Citizens Water Advocacy Group and a retired business owner working to protect the Verde River.*