



City of Phoenix
WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT



Water Supply, Drought & Conservation

Page 1 of 4 6/18/09

BACKGROUND: Phoenix's water supply is good, but please conserve as a lifestyle. The Valley is dry, but reservoir levels are good, because most of our tap water comes from years of snow far north and east of the Valley. Phoenix has the water it needs, but none to waste. It's everyone's job to think about water...every time you use it...and use it responsibly.

1. What is the status of Phoenix's water supply?

Phoenix's water supply is in good shape. Even though Phoenix remains in a regional period of climatic drought that has lasted over 10 years, snow pack far north and east of the Valley has improved reservoir levels in the past year. That snow, not Valley rain, supplies most of our tap water as it travels from far north and east of the Valley to Phoenix treatment plants, then to your tap.

2. How can Phoenix's water supply be so good, when I keep hearing about drought and other areas that are considering water restrictions?

Phoenix has had a hundred years of sure-handed water management. Extremely wise planning for drought in the desert and the fact that we have several water sources has kept Phoenix way ahead of the drought curve for decades. (Phoenix diversified its water portfolio long ago and amended the City Code to promote reuse of water and water conservation.)

3. Are mandatory water use restrictions coming soon? What happens to our water supply if drought continues for a long time?

Even though it has been dry in the Valley, Phoenix will not need to impose mandatory water use restrictions for several years, and that's only if the Colorado, Salt and Verde Rivers' watersheds far north and east of the Valley receive little rain and snow for a number of years in a row. However, continued wise planning and water conservation remain big parts of ensuring our future water supply, especially if the regional drought lasts for a long time. Phoenix will have the water it needs, but none to waste...with your help.

4. What might some of those restrictions be?

Possible drought restrictions years from now could include watering landscaping only on certain days or banning certain water uses. Phoenix is looking into other possible restrictions and would give customers plenty of notice prior to mandatory restrictions. Changing from a water conservation lifestyle to an even lower water use drought lifestyle will be necessary for all of us.

5. What is Phoenix doing to insure our water supply for the future?

Phoenix plans its water supply for 50 to 100 years. Along with monitoring usage and working with its water partners, Phoenix continues to adopt higher water supply

standards, improve groundwater capacity to supplement its surface water supply from snows, and expand the use of highly treated wastewater, or reclaimed water, which saves on drinking water. Phoenix was the first Valley city to adopt a Drought Management Plan in 1990 and continues to enhance it by planning for a variety of water supply scenarios that may exist in the future. Additionally, Arizona is a leader in water banking, which basically allows water to be stored underground and tapped at a later date.

6. Does lack of rain in the Valley have any effect on our water?

Lack of Valley rain does have an impact on water usage, although very little, usually only when residents increase their irrigation of grass and plants. Conversely, when it does rain, water usage lessens as customers turn back that irrigation.

7. Why doesn't Phoenix just stop growth?

Effectively managed growth and water supply go hand in hand. Phoenix's water supply management strategies build upon a history of wise water management and take into account effective growth management. The development industry and growth are one of the important components of our economy and as we have unfortunately recently experienced everyone's pocketbook is affected by down turns in this economy. Maintaining a sustainable community will require balancing growth management with adequate water supplies for future growth. Since 1998 Phoenix's per person use of water has declined despite a 15% growth rate - which is a testament to water supply planning and our customer's water conservation efforts. But Phoenix is not relying upon water conservation to provide a water supply for growth. Phoenix is developing and deploying new water supplies, such as additional allocations of Colorado River water to provide for future growth. Phoenix will be relying upon water conservation, groundwater, and reclaimed water as supplies during drought and water shortages for existing and future water customers.

8. I don't think I should have to pay for new customers' water, should I?

Phoenix always is looking at our various development codes to insure they reflect the state of the art for low water use devices and practices. Also, Phoenix has a 20 year history of using development impact fees to help pay for new water infrastructure and supplies, so existing customers don't foot the bill for growth. Unfortunately, the Home Builders Association through the State legislature has been attempting to restrict or eliminate the ability of Arizona cities to charge development impact fees. If cities ability to assess and use impact fees is restricted or eliminated by the State legislature, given the importance of having adequate water supplies to meet future growth needs, the city of Phoenix will likely have no other option but to raise water rates to acquire and deploy new water supplies.

9. Can the drought cause higher water rates?

Drought could eventually affect our water rates if the city needs to pump additional groundwater, purchase additional water supplies that may be available at the time, or hire additional staff to enforce mandated water restrictions.

10. Why is Phoenix’s water supply so different from rural Arizona’s supply?

Comparing Phoenix’s water supplies to any other city’s or region’s supply is an apples and oranges comparison. Phoenix’s water supply is better than many rural Arizona areas because Phoenix has multiple water sources - surface, groundwater and highly treated wastewater (for crops, parks, etc.) We’re also able to capture water during wet years and use it during the dry years. Other parts of Arizona made very different decisions about their water supply years ago and rely more heavily on shallow groundwater supplies or storage systems that are much more susceptible to dry cycles. Phoenix’s foresight and use of surface, ground and reclaimed water allow for a redundancy of supply that protects our customers during times of drought.

11. Why don’t you do something about golf courses and others who use a lot of water?

Golf courses and many other businesses, not only are vital to our economy, but they use some of the most highly advanced watering systems available. After all, they need to look out for their bottom line. Additionally, some Valley golf courses use non-potable water, such as non-drinkable well water, unprocessed surface water, and reclaimed water, which is highly treated wastewater. Customers’ drinking water is delivered through a different piping system.

12. Why should I save water when my neighbors and businesses use so much?

Water conservation is everyone’s individual responsibility. In the future Phoenix will be targeting high water users with special programs and possible surcharges. But, Phoenix cannot police all households and businesses to monitor water use. Please take it upon yourself to do the right thing and use water wisely.

13. I don’t even live in the desert, why should I save water?

A: If you live anywhere in Phoenix or the Valley, you live in the desert. So, the need for water conservation affects everyone.

14. Why isn’t there more information out there about our water supply and water conservation?

Actually, Phoenix consistently places information in newspapers, TV, radio, on-line, in schools and on Phoenix Channel 11. Phoenix has a twenty five year old, award winning water conservation public awareness program. Even though we don’t have the funds to show up every night as TV commercials, Phoenix uses a variety of campaigns; school, residential, adult education, and business programs; hundreds of local and national newspaper, television and radio interviews each year; editorials in the Arizona Republic and community papers; articles in the customer newsletter “Notes;” PHX 11 WATERways and Water Works videos; public service announcements; talk show appearances; movie theatre ads; Project WET teacher education programs; billboard campaigns and numerous newspaper advertisements; extensive phoenix.gov website information; participation in community fairs and events; staff presentations to community groups; mascot “Wayne Drop” appearing at special events; water bill messages; on-hold messages; and even YouTube videos with actor Leslie Nielsen.

15. Is Phoenix practicing what it preaches about saving water.

Yes. City departments have had mandatory water use restrictions in the past and continue to use water responsibly at parks, municipal golf courses, and city office sites.

16. What can I do to conserve water and save money?

Simply Think About Water...every time you use it...and use it responsibly.

- Know how your landscaping or sprinkler timer works. Decrease watering as weather cools or whenever it rains in your area.
- Don't over-water native plants. Learn how much water they need and realize that they are desert plants and will die from too much water.
- Plant grass only where children and pets use it, not just as a decoration.
- Invest in a swimming pool cover to help prevent evaporation.
- Sweep your driveway instead of hosing it down.
- Don't fill your washing machine with water if you don't have a full load of clothes in it.
- Run your dishwasher only when it's full.
- Buy low-flow toilets and faucets when you replace existing ones.

17. Where can I get more information?

A: For information on Phoenix's water supply, drought and conservation program visit phoenix.gov/water. Customers also can learn a wealth of conservation information from the website www.wateruseitwisely.com, or by e-mailing the city of Phoenix's Water Conservation Office at conservation@phoenix.gov.