

# GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY

Developing Community  
Water Plan



# INTRODUCTION AND ROADMAP

On September 16, 2015 the Council adopted the 5 Year Water Plan (Plan). The purpose of the Plan is to ensure the success of two goals:

1. Increase farming in an affordable way; and
2. Recreate the Gila River in an affordable way.

This presentation addresses the following topics:

- \* Issues that Created the Need for the Plan
- \* Summary of the Plan
- \* Drought Considerations

# THE NEED FOR A FORMAL WATER PLAN

- \* Starting in 2014, Community Leadership began confronting numerous issues related to the Community's increased water use as a result of the Water Settlement.
- \* The two biggest issues included:
  - \* Significant OM&R costs that will be the Community's responsibility as P-MIP is slowly turned over to the Community; and
  - \* The rising cost of CAP water made the prospect of its continued use for irrigation on the Reservation economically difficult, if not impossible.

# PRE-PLAN PATH NOT SUSTAINABLE

- \* Unreliable nature of Gila River water and limits to groundwater capacity, combined with the planned development of 77,000 acres of farm land after full P-MIP build out meant the Community would likely need over 185,000 AFY of CAP water after full build out.
- \* Given the rising cost CAP water, if the Community did not adjust its build out plan its water costs alone, after full build out of 77,000 acres, could easily be more than \$12 million per year.

# DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATER PLAN BY COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- \* Community Leadership conducted work sessions to develop a plan to address these issues and ensure two important goals:
  - \* Ensure expansion of farming in an affordable way; and
  - \* Return portions of the Gila River in an affordable way.
- \* Between September 2014 and August 2015, Community Leadership held four work sessions to develop the Plan.
- \* On September 16, 2015, the Community Council approved the Plan.
- \* The Plan will be revisited periodically to ensure it is achieving its policy goals.

# CONTAINING WATER COSTS

- \* Efforts to contain water cost included the following:
  - \* Reducing the size of the P-MIP System to save OM&R costs
  - \* Continue current actions and efforts to reduce water costs, such as:
    - \* Rehab unused wells or drilling new wells to use more groundwater from underneath the Reservation, and develop additional MAR sites bring back river and ensure healthy water table; and
    - \* Continuing to enter into exchange agreements with other Arizona water users to facilitate use of less expensive water on the Reservation while finding buyers for more expensive CAP water off the Reservation.

# PERMANENT WATER FUND

- \* The Permanent Water Fund is funded through a combination of Community money and the federal Water OM&R Trust Fund.
- \* Approximately \$60 million came from the Community's Water OM&R Trust Fund, that was earning low interests in a federal trust account.
- \* The balance comes from current and future CAP and long-term storage credit water marketing.

# WITHDRAWAL OF THE WATER OM&R FUND

- \* The Plan withdrew the Water OM&R Fund from the management of the federal trustee and placed it in the Permanent Water Fund so the Community could invest it at a higher rate of return and use the interest to help fund future water and OM&R costs.



# RETURN OF THE GILA RIVER AND AQUIFER RECHARGE

- \* Developing Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) Facilities
- \* Creation of Long-Term Storage Credits
- \* Recharging Aquifers
  - \* Plan increased use of groundwater to reduce the Community's use of CAP water for irrigation.
  - \* The establishment of MAR sites recharges underground water supplies to ensure a more sustainable pumped supply for farmers.

# IMPLEMENTATION – MAR 5

- \* MAR 5 is the Community's showcase facility.
- \* MAR 5 is located in District 2, 3 and 4.
- \* At the MAR 5, CAP water is delivered directly into the river channel; creating a riparian area and flowing water in the stretch of the Gila River.
- \* The Community also developed an interpretive trail at the site.











# DROUGHT CONSIDERATIONS



- \* The Community working with ADWR, the Bureau of Reclamation, CAP and other Arizona stakeholders on the drought contingency plan in (DCP) 2016

# DCP

- \* The Community's actions under its Plan freed up CAP water for conservation efforts.
- \* In an effort to make DCP implementation work, and free up more CAP water conservation, the Community accelerated its well rehab program under its Plan.
- \* The Community has conserved or stored nearly 300,00 acre-feet as part of pre-DCP and DCP implementation efforts.

# DROUGHT AND FUTURE PLANNING

- \* Under its Plan the Community responds to changing situations.
- \* With the current condition of the Colorado River the Community will reassess its Plan to see if other actions need to take place to protect its water rights.
- \* The Community believes the only way to address difficult issues like drought is through innovation.