



Sonoran Institute Growing Water Smart Peer Network Webinar: Colorado River Negotiations

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

**WATER RESOURCES
RESEARCH CENTER**

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wrrc.arizona.edu

WRRC bridges academia and the real-world of water management

- The University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center (WRRC) tackles key water policy and management issues, empowers informed decision-making, and enriches understanding through engagement, education, and applied research.
- Water Webinars, annual conference, publications, informational resources, etc.
- Partnerships, engagement, and respectful dialogues are essential to our work.

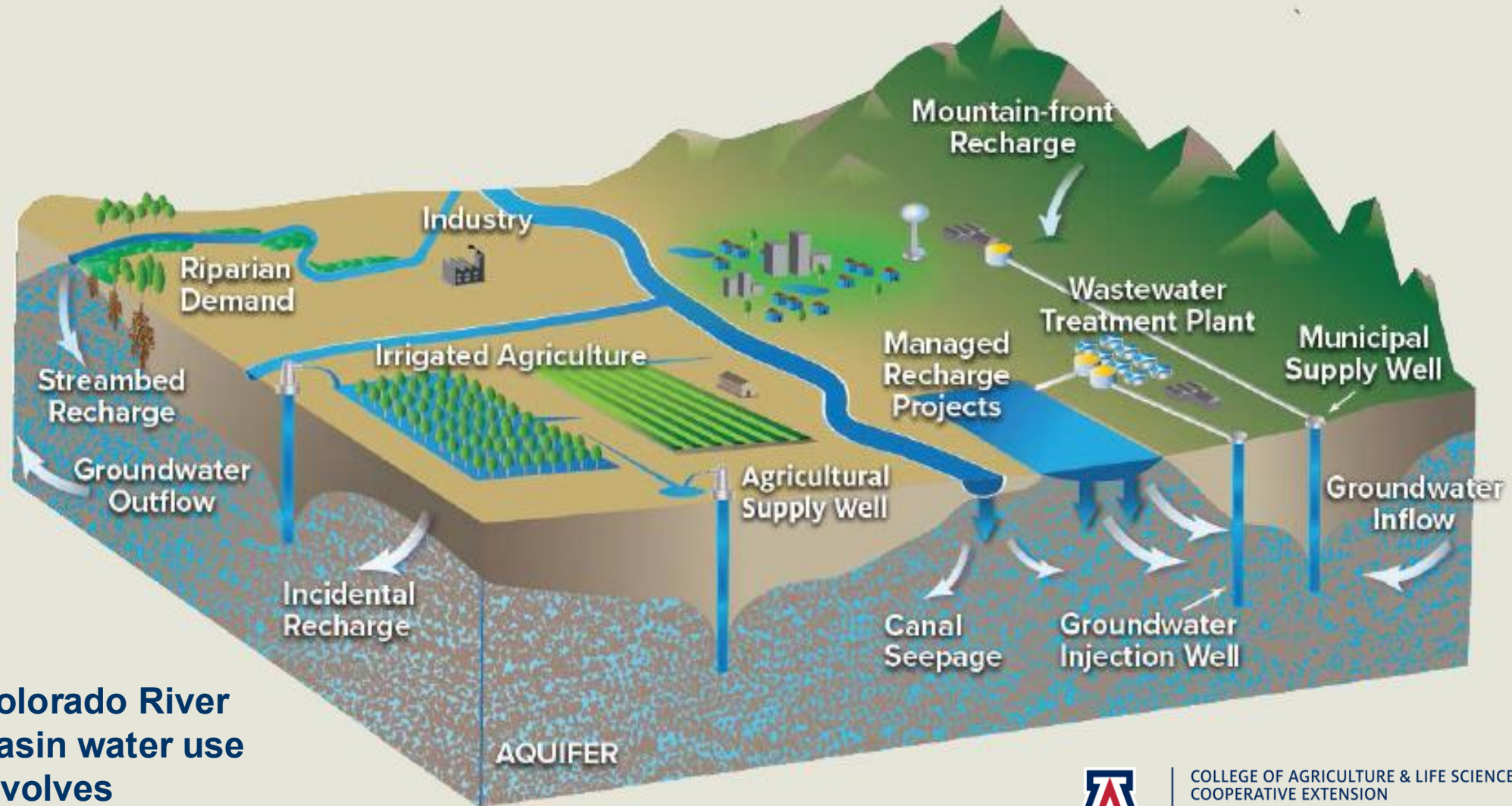


Water policy and management reflect many determining factors

- Resource Availability
- Location of water demands and supplies
- Economics
-  • Historic and Current Legal/Institutional Framework
- The nature of involvement of multiple governmental and non-governmental entities, including the extent of centralized versus decentralized decision making
-  • Politics of Area
- Public values and socio-cultural factors
- Historical context
- Information
- Etc...

Importance of Context

Water Cycle Context



Colorado River
Basin water use
involves
groundwater, too!!



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Arizona's water sources and demand

Arizona Department of Water Resources as of 2020

ARIZONA'S WATER SUPPLY



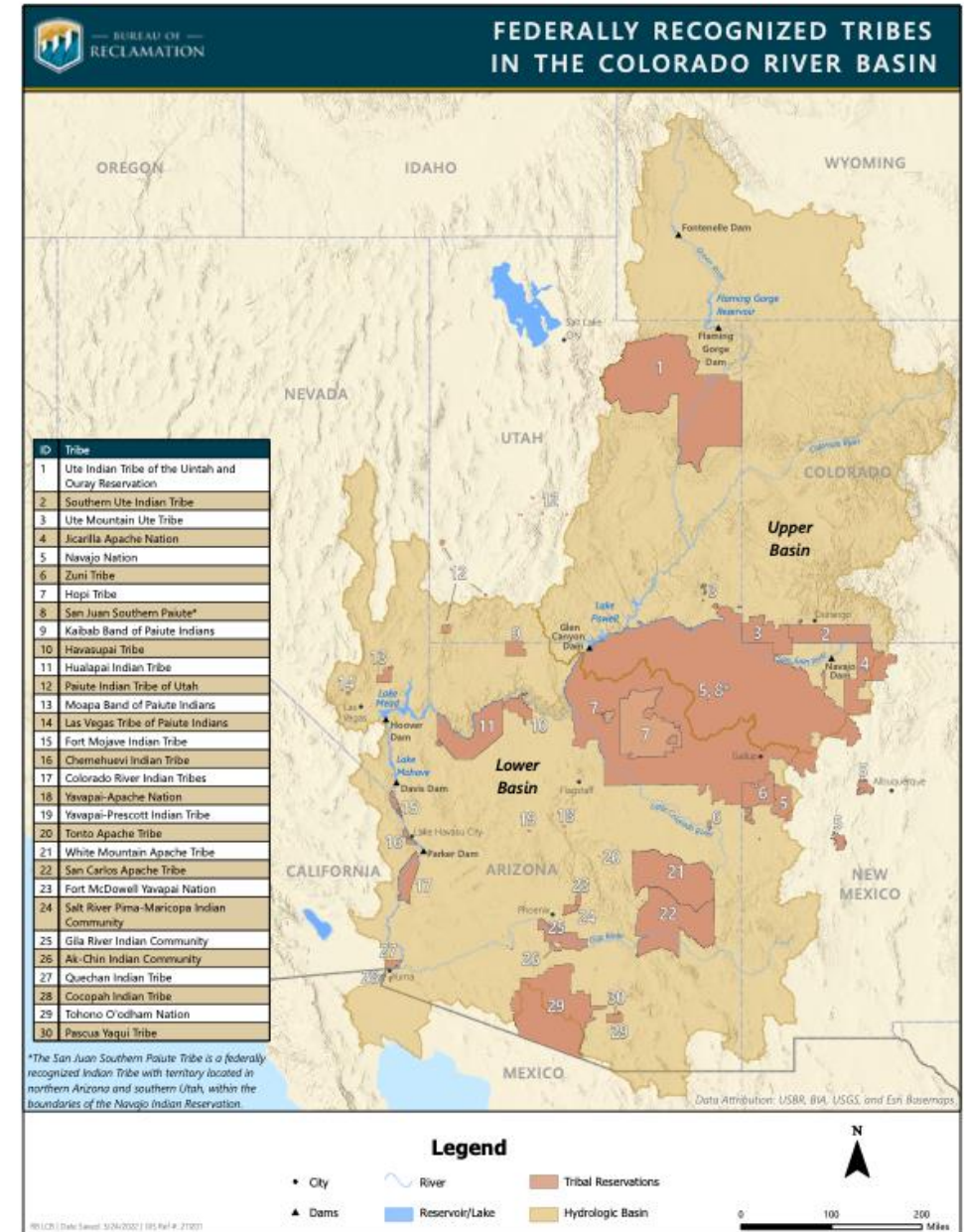
SOURCE: ADWR, 2020

ARIZONA'S WATER USE BY SECTOR (2019)



SOURCE: ADWR, 2020

Geographic and Jurisdictional Context



Wicked Water Problems Context

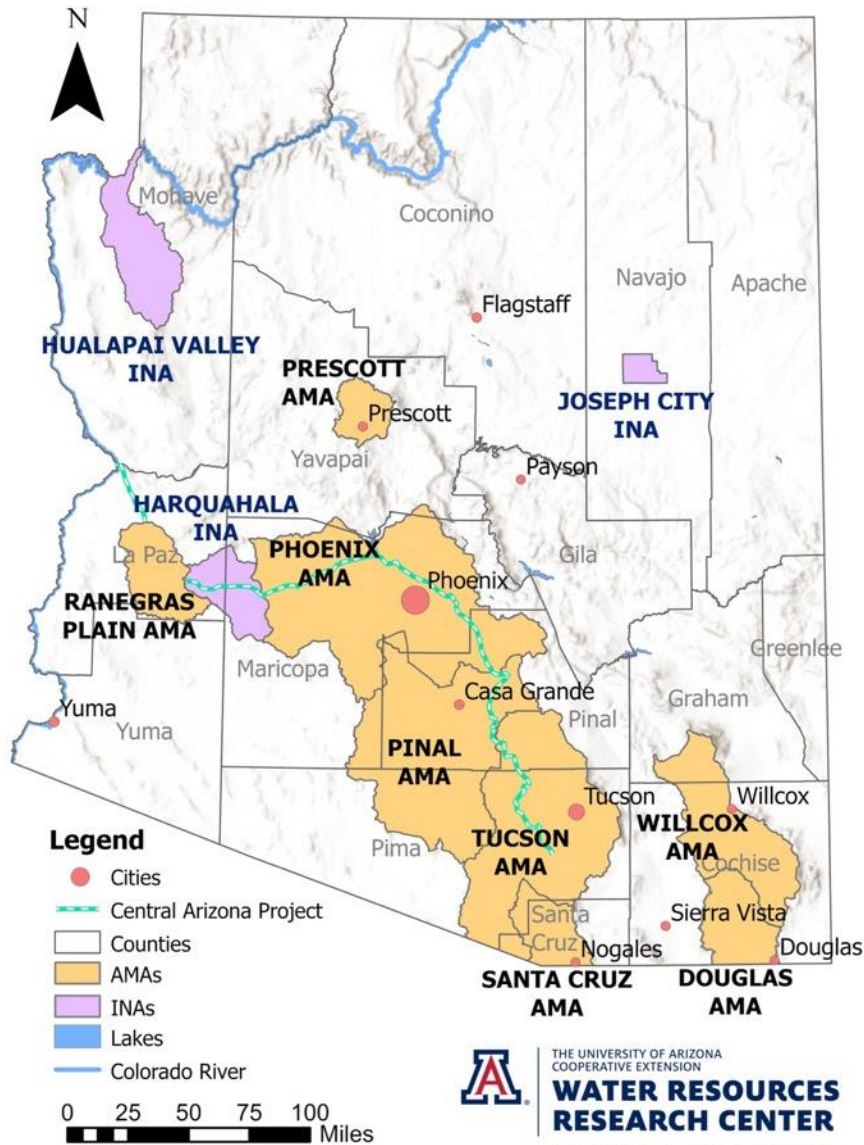
- Wicked Water Problems are big problems that do not have a simple pathway to resolving them.
- Two Wicked Water Problems Arizona faces:
 - Imbalance of Water Supply and Demand (Colorado River in particular)
 - Groundwater invisibility and overdraft
- Innovation and collaboration are necessary for addressing Wicked Water Problems.



Photos: SB Megdal



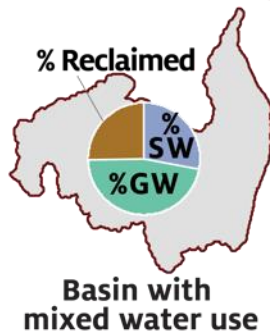
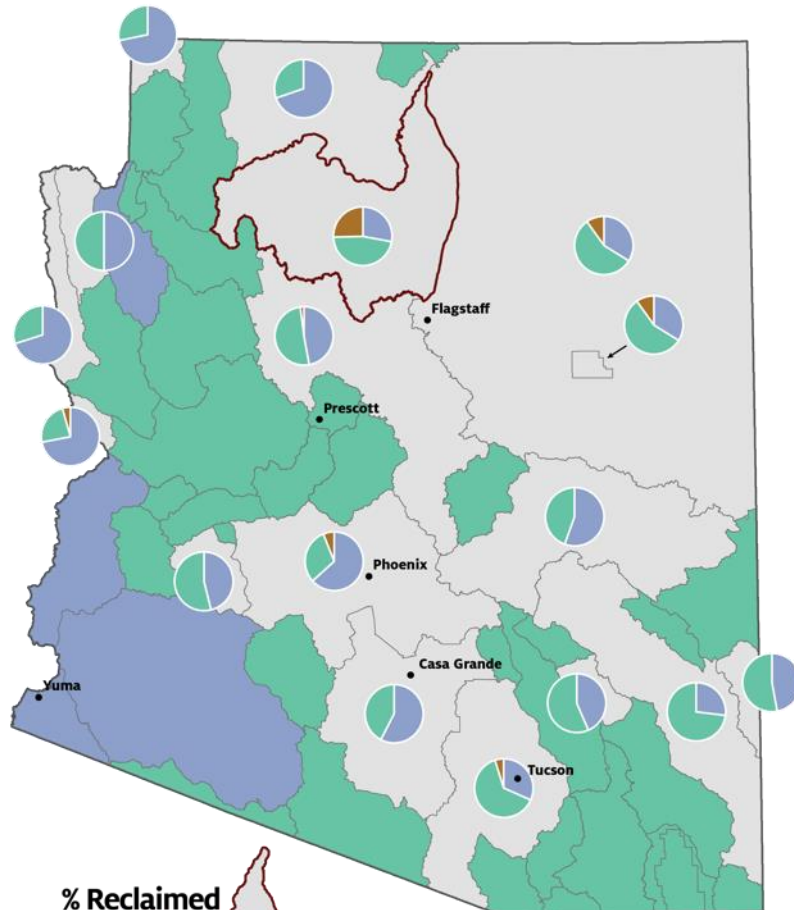
Active Management Areas (AMAs) and Irrigation Non-expansion Areas (INAs)



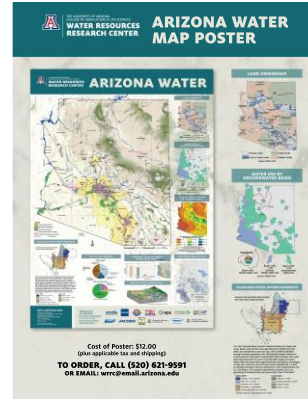
Groundwater is regulated in Active Management Areas (AMAs).

Surface water and groundwater are regulated separately.

WATER USE BY GROUNDWATER BASIN

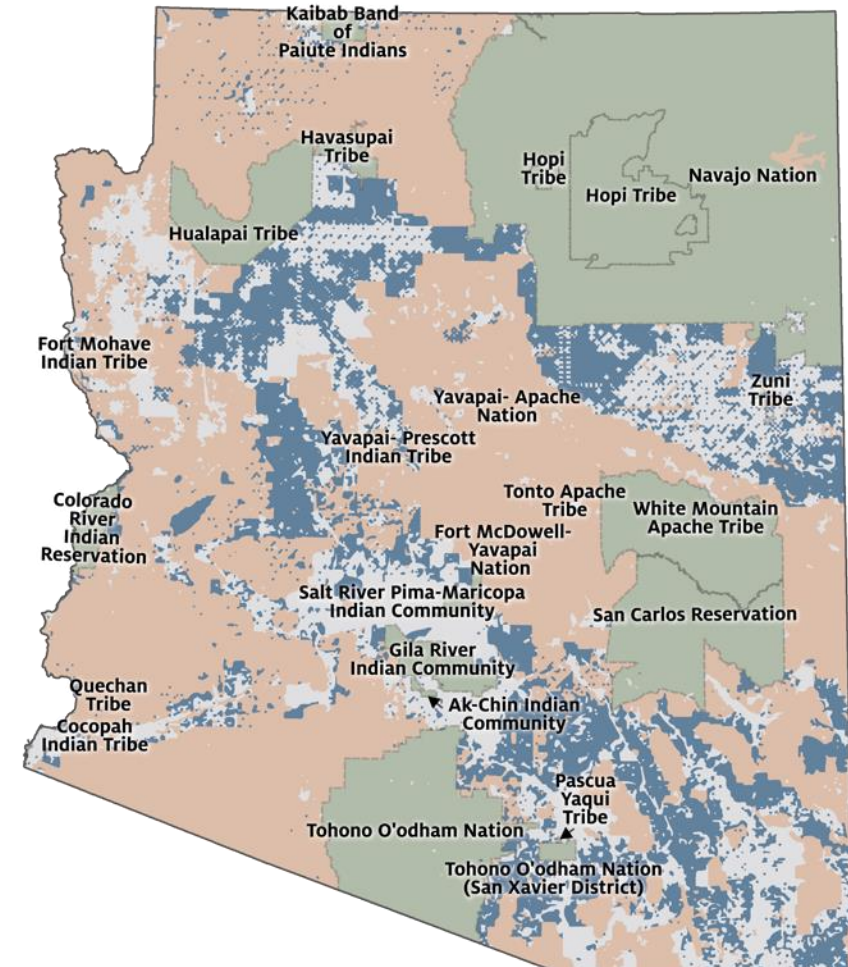


Source: ADWR 2016



Water
resource
situations
vary across
Arizona

LAND OWNERSHIP

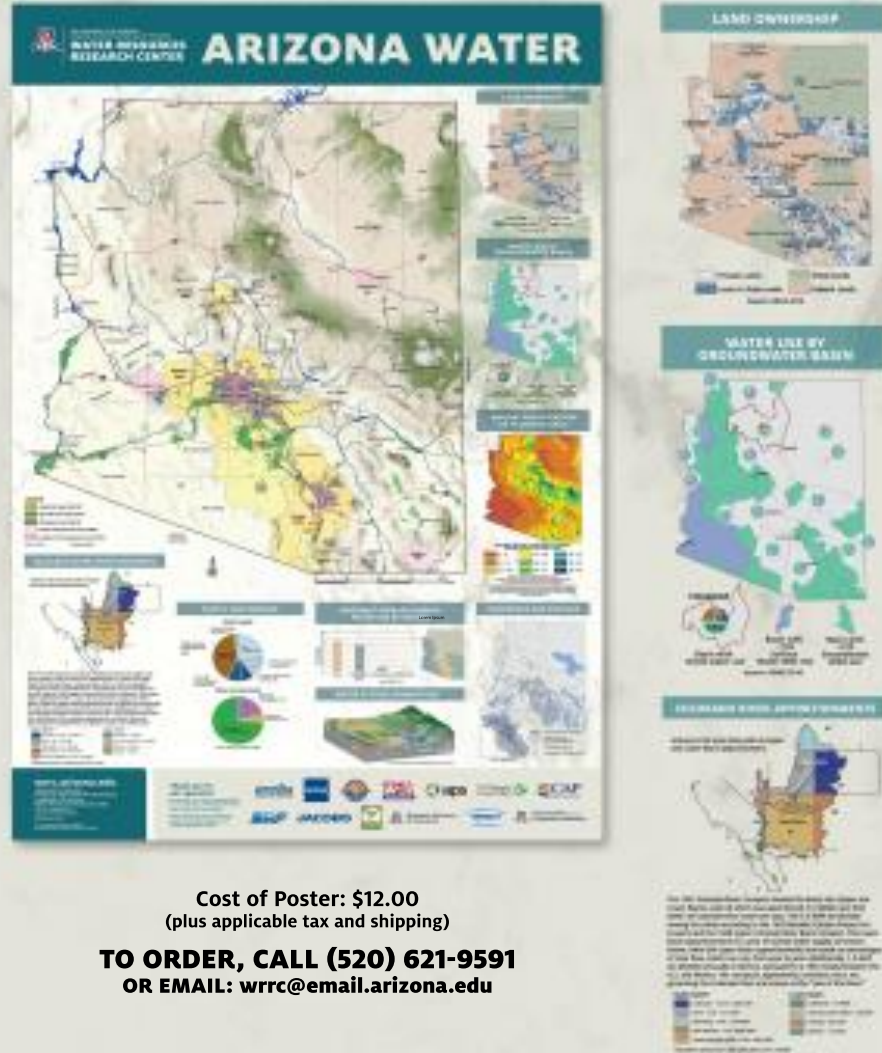


Source: ARLIS 2010



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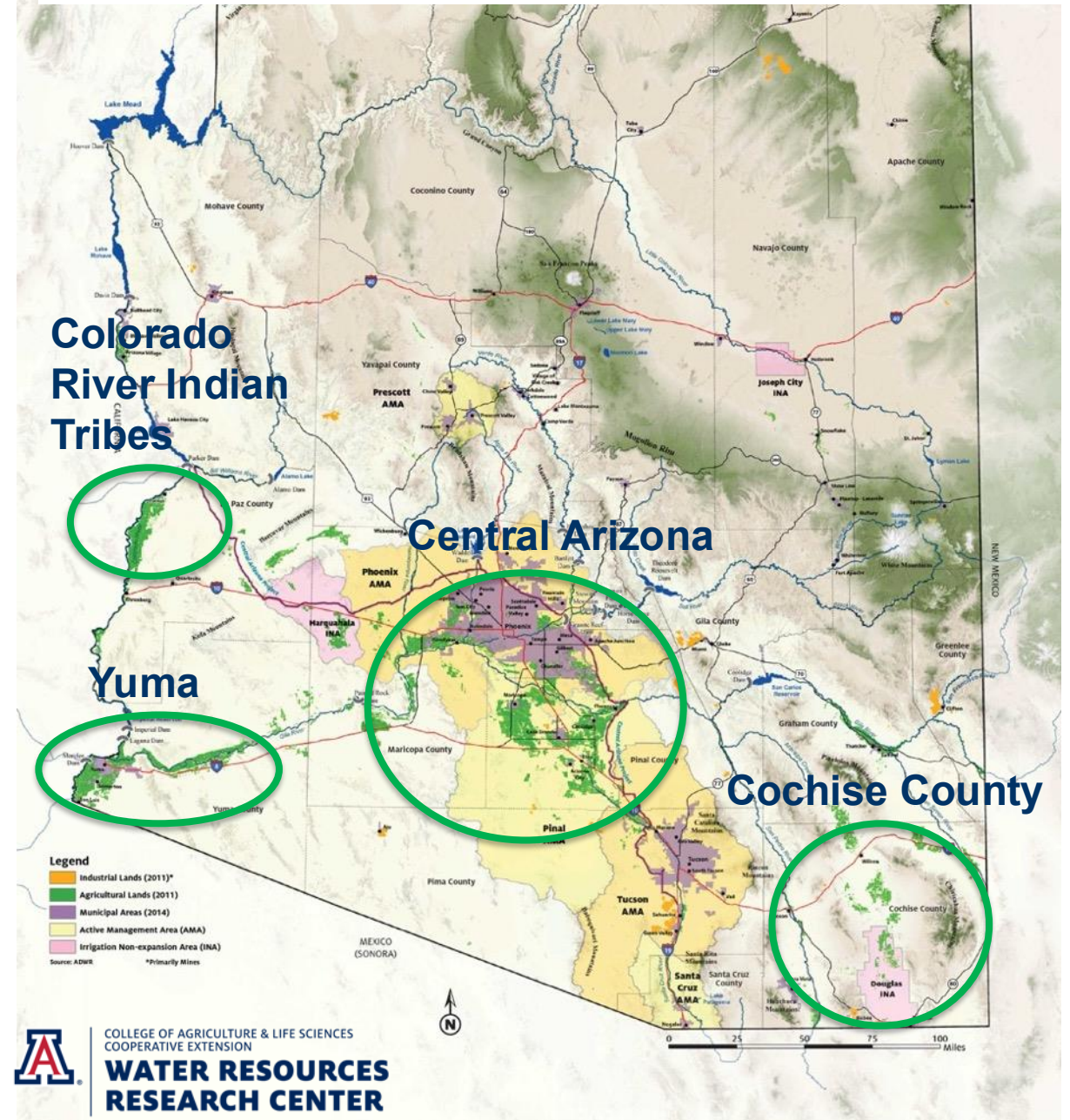
ARIZONA WATER MAP POSTER



Cost of Poster: \$12.00
(plus applicable tax and shipping)

**TO ORDER, CALL (520) 621-9591
OR EMAIL: wrrc@email.arizona.edu**

Selected Agricultural Zones



Categories of solution options to address imbalance of supply and demand

- Conservation
- Water pricing
- Greater efficiency
- Water reuse
- Water storage/banking/managed aquifer recharge (MAR)
- Desalination (augmentation example)
- Moving water
- Marketing and other mutually agreed-upon transactions
- Rainwater and stormwater capture
- How we design our buildings, communities, and landscapes

Policy changes and creative partnerships and \$\$ (incentives)

But how do we get to “yes”?

Process Factors for success, Megdal case study in *Routledge Handbook of Water Diplomacy*

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003178439>

Seven factors contributing to successful outcomes:

1. A functioning mechanism for cooperation, including knowledge co-production
2. Mutual respect contributing to trust
3. Involvement of interested parties (stakeholders)
4. Good communication
5. Persistence and Patience
6. Eating with your partners
7. Leadership

Additional factors:

→ Transparency

Sharing Lessons Learned (+ and -)



Transboundary Aquifer Assessment
Program Arizona-Sonora Workshop
Hermosillo, Sonora, MX
September 2024

WRRC Water Webinar: Global Water Bankruptcy: Living Beyond our Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era



Image: Stockholm Water Foundation

Access the recorded webinar:
<https://wrrc.arizona.edu/events/wrrc-water-webinar-global-water-bankruptcy-living-beyond-our-hydrological-means-post-crisis>

People
appreciate
hearing the
straight story,
even if
discouraging.



by Sharon B. Megdal
February 20, 2026

Superstition considers **Friday the 13th** an unlucky day, a day for inauspicious happenings. Regarding the Colorado River, two concerning developments were announced on Friday, February 13, 2026. State officials from the seven US States sharing the Colorado River issued statements regarding the lack of agreement on a new framework for sharing Colorado River shortages when the current operating framework expires at the end of this year. The federal government had established February 14 as its deadline for an agreement. Also on February 13, the US Bureau of Reclamation released its **February 2026 Most Probable 24-Month Study** for Colorado River operations, which was accompanied by a news release titled **Spring Runoff Projections for Colorado River Basin Worsen**, which indicates: "A lack of precipitation over the past month has pushed the most probable wateryear inflow forecast for Lake Powell down by 1.5 million-acre feet (maf) since January – now roughly 3.0 maf lower than projections made in November. That loss is equivalent to approximately 50 feet in elevation in Lake Powell."

Underscoring just how bad the winter precipitation has been to date, the release soberingly reports: "The wateryear inflow is now estimated to be 1.5 maf lower than the 24-Month Study projections) to: "

- 3,490 ft – minimum power release water is reduced and
- 3,476 ft – in March 2027; th to release...water from Glen



constraining the ability

Thank you!!

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<https://wrrc.arizona.edu/>



<https://wrrc.arizona.edu/publications/weekly-wave>