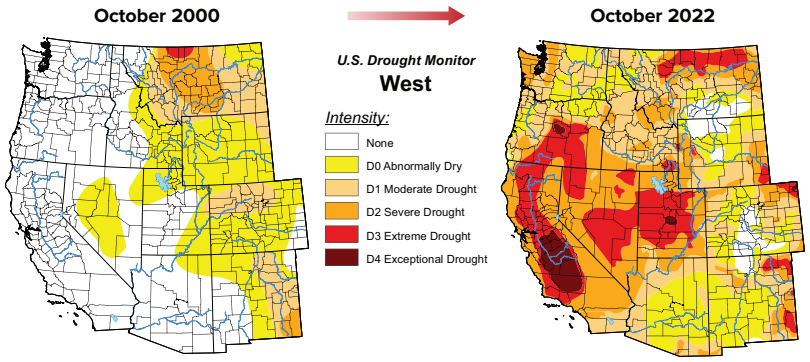
2 Water Scarcity Trends

Most of Arizona is desert, where average annual precipitation ranges from zero to 16 inches, but where flowing rivers and large aquifers are sources of abundant water. A history of reservoir, canal, and groundwater pump development has meant that over the past century, water was readily available for almost any use in most of the state. Improvements in water efficiency and increases in conservation have allowed continued growth; however, drought and groundwater overdraft signal a new era of limits.

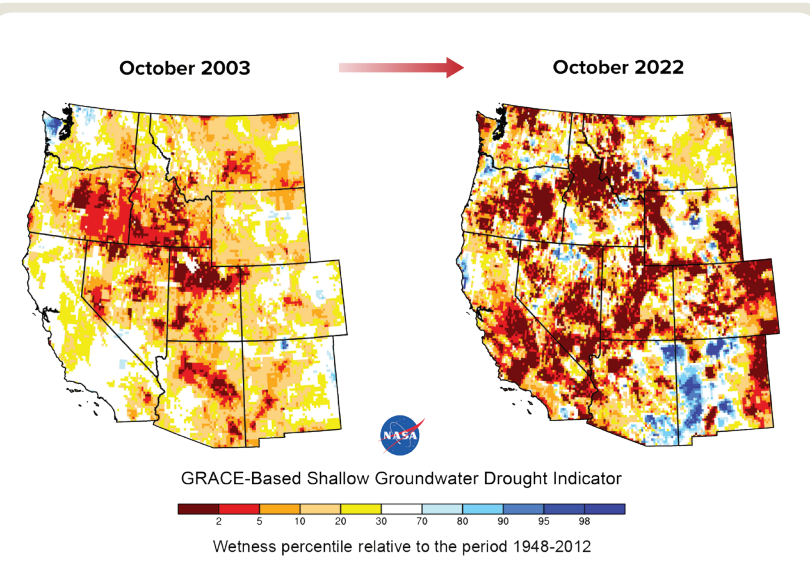
Surface Water

- For the past two decades, the American West has been enduring a hot "mega-drought" that may indicate a new normal.
- The drought in Arizona has been less intense than in other western states, and local surface water remains relatively reliable.
- **BUT** much of the Colorado River Basin has been experiencing exceptionally hot dry conditions, resulting in low runoff.
- The river's diminished flow volume threatens Arizona's Central Arizona Project (CAP) surface water supply.



Groundwater

- With proactive policies, Arizona has maintained and even improved aquifer storage in some areas;
- **BUT** CAP water has been central to the state's groundwater strategy. It replaced groundwater use by agriculture in much of Central Arizona and was the main source of water for aquifer recharge.



- With less Colorado River water delivered through CAP, some farmers will return to groundwater use. To maintain adequate water supplies it is increasingly important to find alternatives and additional water efficiencies.