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**22 MARCH**  
**WORLD**  
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## Reflections on World Water Day

by **Sharon B. Megdal**  
03/22/2019

**W**orld Water Day is a good day for reflection. Just a few days ago, on March 19, 2019, representatives of the seven states of the Colorado River Basin gathered in Phoenix, Arizona to sign a letter asking Congress to approve implementation of the drought contingency plans detailed in the documents attached to the letter. Immediately thereafter, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman announced termination of the Department of Interior's request for further input on how to reduce the water supply risks the Colorado River Basin is facing. The March 19th signing and announcement came less than two months after the Arizona Legislature and Governor approved historic actions requisite to Arizona's participation in the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan.

The consensus reached by the Colorado River Basin States is noteworthy, as are the efforts within Arizona to develop an implementation plan to share the burden of reduced water deliveries. Pending congressional action, we are entering a new phase of water management wherein we adapt to the reality of a hydrologically stressed, over-allocated river system. Getting to this point has been difficult, and the work is by no means over, even in the short run. There will be funding requests of the federal government related to the Salton Sea and Central Arizona agricultural pumping capacity. Additional documents to complete Arizona's implementation plan will be finalized and approved. Then the heavy lifting will begin on developing plans for the longer term. The drought contingency plans are an overlay to the interim shortage sharing guidelines approved in 2007. Those regulations are set to expire in 2026. Formal discussions on the successor regulations are set to begin by the end of 2020.

I teach a graduate class on water policy in the Spring semester, for which I give a short mid-term. Some test questions have no right or wrong answer. An example is "Explain why you are optimistic, pessimistic, or neither about resolving the water issues of the region." As I reflect on the status of water management, I wish to give my short response. I am optimistic that we will continue to work together to develop the policies and actions needed for residents in Arizona and the broader region to have access to reliable and safe water. The work will be difficult and will never end, at whatever the geographic scale. Water is Life. And water is scarce in the desert. We must all be responsible, informed water users and stewards. This is my simple but I think important message for World Water Day.



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