

Statement of Stan Riddle
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Water Issues Town Hall
July 1, 2008

My name is Stan Riddle, and on behalf of the Green Valley Community Coordinating Council, where I serve as its first Vice President, I wish to thank Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords for establishing this Town Hall meeting today. We are here to discuss water issues that affect the residents and business entities within the Greater Green Valley that includes the town of Sahuarita and surrounding areas.

I believe you should know why the Green Valley Community Coordinating Council is here today. GVCCC, or better known as the Council, was organized in 1973 by its articles of incorporation and bylaws as a 501C(4) Arizona corporation and as a result has been the catalyst for the past 35 years in bringing together issues pertinent to growth and development for community discussion, action and resolution. The Council functions very much like a town council but in an unincorporated area. As a local volunteer government in place of a local legal jurisdiction, it has no legal authority, yet it serves as an effective conduit to many county and state governmental agencies.

Its influence comes from its membership that is comprised of 66 separate homeowner associations that contain approximately 19,000 residents and that represent approximately 90% of all residents within its corporate boundary. In addition there are 21 local organizations and businesses that are institutional members of this Council. If we include residents and businesses within the Greater Green Valley area to include the town of Sahuarita, the current population is estimated at close to 50,000 that are affected by the concerns of an adequate water supply.

The Council has been asked today to participate as one of the Town Hall presenters who represent Green Valley residents. In the past, the Council has had a presence at most all of the public meetings, town halls, forums, hearings, seminars, field trips and citizen group meetings that have focused on water issues.

Ten years ago, some of the water issues that are being discussed here today were the same water issues that were discussed then and that, we are sorry to say is a lot discussion with no positive action either at the county, state or federal level.

In 1998, the population of the Greater Green Valley area was approximately 25,000. Water for the entire area was and continues to be served by a aquifer located generally along the path of the Santa Cruz River as it travels north out of Mexico, goes through Santa Cruz County and into Pima County through the Green Valley area and then into the Greater Tucson area. At that time, the major water users in the Green Valley area were the mining operations and agriculture with residential use at less than 2 percent. Mining and agriculture continue to be the major water users today.

Sources tell us that since 1965, the aquifer has been in an overdraft position without the benefit of any significant recharge. During the past 10 years, the level of water in the

aquifer serving the area has shrunk by some six feet. Concerns were expressed then by water districts serving the community that conservation, recharge facilities, flood control, waste water, Central Arizona Project water known as CAP water or other sources would be needed to preserve and maintain adequate levels in the aquifer to serve the needs of the communities now and in the future. At that time, there was a lot of discussion held in governmental agencies, but nothing materialized to correct, improve or alleviate the situation.

It is now ten years later and during that period there have been many meetings held by a great number of groups, agencies and organizations to discuss the water issues, its source and its availability to the community now and into the future. As previously stated in the past ten years, the population has now doubled to approximately 50,000 and there are still no adequate answers, programs or solutions to our water problem. Then again, maybe there are solutions, but no definitive action has been taken.

The only thing that has been accomplished is the formation of a number of organizations and groups to address the water issue and that has resulted in just talk and little action most of which has been thwarted by governmental bureaucracy. Some of the organizations and groups that have been involved in the process include:

- Upper Santa Cruz providers and users group – USCPUG
- Citizens Water Action Coalition
- City/County Water and Wastewater Study Oversight Com.

You will probably hear today a lot of suggestions, ideas and thoughts from some of the speakers that follow, but those suggestions, ideas and thoughts are meaningless if all we do is talk about them and you listen and then we all go about our daily activity and push the water issues aside saying we will “take care of it some other day when it becomes absolutely necessary”.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't believe that is the answer we are looking for today. What we would like to hear from you is a positive response and in that regard, we would like to offer some suggestions for your consideration in the following courses of action:

1. At the federal level, and without violating the Clean Water Act secure a commitment from the Army Corps of Engineers to develop where feasible structures that channel the flow of storm water from our arroyos and other tributaries into the Santa Cruz Valley aquifer via recharge stations starting in Nogales and continuing on toward Tucson.
2. At the state level, under the auspices of the Arizona Department of Water Resources and the Arizona Corporation Commission or other applicable agencies form a regional water conservation district that includes all water companies, applicable governmental agencies, the Indian Nation and other entities that draw the majority of their water source from the aquifer. Working together their mission would be to preserve the water quality and maintain the aquifer at its current or improved level.

3. At the county level for all future development, both residential and commercial provide for retention basins and direct the flow of rainwater and waste water into those basins and further into the recharge areas.

Based upon current studies, it appears that the aquifer serving the Greater Green Valley area is falling at the rate of 4 to 6 inches a year. Growth in the valley in the next ten years is projected to more than double the current population and during that time the aquifer could fall another 5 to 6 feet without any growth. In that regard, right now in 2008, there are 18,680 residential units in the planning stage that will be located in the Greater Green Valley area in the coming years. This does not include a number of commercial projects that are also on drawing boards or residential/commercial development within Santa Cruz County. With this projected growth, the aquifer could fall at even a faster rate unless steps are taken now, not tomorrow or next year to protect the system.

The idea that the Central Arizona Project Water, or CAP water as we call it, maybe the answer to future water shortages here in the Green Valley area is an assumption with no basis of fact. Demands on the source of CAP water come from not only Arizona, but also from Nevada and California where they are experiencing drought and potential water shortages due to dramatic changes in the weather patterns. In our opinion, the use of CAP water is destined to be short term fix unless provisions now, not sometime in the future, are made to secure a permanent solution. Some of the suggestions stated above may only be a part of that solution and there are probably many other viable suggestions that will also be presented today.

On still another subject that is water related is the rights given to mining operations by the 1872 Federal Mining Act. This antiquated law needs to be revisited at the federal level and changed to fit and meet the needs of a growth pattern in a population and demographics that has changed dramatically across this nation in the past 136 years. The potential Rosemont mine on the north and eastern slope of the Santa Rita Mountains and its need for 5,000 acre feet of water each year that would come from the Santa Cruz Valley aquifer has caused a great deal of concern not only from the residents of Greater Green Valley area, but from residents in Southern Tucson and that surrounding area. Part of Rosemont's agreement in exchange for water from the Santa Cruz Valley aquifer is to provide on a voluntary basis for recharge of CAP water into Marana area aquifer. This exchange is a benefit to Marana but of no benefit to the Greater Green Valley area where the water will be removed. We are very much aware that there is a much bigger picture in dealing with a sustainable flow and availability of water for the Green Valley-Tucson area as well as the entire state of Arizona.

In closing, we implore those governmental agencies that have a direct or indirect control of our water resources to take corrective action now to maintain the lifestyle and well being of the residents and businesses of the Greater Green Valley area. We all know that actions speak louder than words and in that regard, there have been thousands if not millions of words spoken on the subject of water, but so far as we see it, no definitive action has been taken at the federal level. We sincerely hope that actions will follow as a result of this Town Hall meeting. Thank you.