

October 18 , 2023

Katie Hobbs
Governor of Arizona
1700 W. Washington St.
Suite 230
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: Governor's Water Policy Committee Proposal for Rural Arizona

Dear Governor Hobbs:

The following organizations and individual water users respectfully request that the flawed and unfair process being deployed by the Rural Groundwater Committee be scrapped. Only a convening of the real rural water users and producer experts can be called on to develop a program for rural Arizona.

The so-called 'Local Groundwater Stewardship Area' (LGSA) proposal being rammed through an unfair process is vehemently opposed by the undersigned organizations and individuals. The LGSA proposal is neither local nor fair – and to be clear – not supported by rural Arizona's agricultural producers. What we have witnessed so far in the "Rural Groundwater Committee" is nothing more than an exercise to justify a proposal that has already been roundly rejected by the Arizona Legislature multiple times despite the opposing voices representing rural water users and agriculture interests..

We are committed to an honest, open, and collaborative process to discuss viable proposals to protect rural Arizona's groundwater. Such a process must have the producers and citizens who use and produce products with water at the table. They are the ones being targeted to reduce their water use...in other words...they are the ones with something to lose.

From the Rural Groundwater Committee proceedings thus far, it is apparent that LGSA proponents and ADWR view the LGSA concept as the predetermined regulatory framework for rural Arizona, subject only to trivial language tweaks. That regulatory framework was not developed by, in cooperation with, or with the consent of rural Arizona water users who stand to lose access to water necessary for their livelihoods. The manner in which the LGSA proposal is being rushed through the Committee while objections and alternatives put forth by rural stakeholders and their representatives are being ignored, indicates that their input is not truly welcome. A recent statement during the Committee process – "... we did not get to vote on agriculture 10 years ago..." exemplifies a critical flaw in the process. To that end, the initiation, creation, planning and goal setting components of the LGSA do not empower local stakeholders to determine how best to manage their water resources, but rather create a super water and land use board that empowers the Governor and the DWR Director to dictate what water uses they desire in rural Arizona. This will never be acceptable to us.

Moreover, recent actions by the Hobbs Administration to cancel State Land Agricultural Leases, which we believe to be unlawful, combined with arbitrary inspections for the apparent purpose of identifying frivolous violations as a pretext for revoking additional agricultural leases, leads us to believe the LGSA proposal is merely another component serving a broader agenda to destroy the agricultural economy in Arizona. These actions will destabilize rural Arizona's economy and threaten the food security of this state. We cannot stand idle while this administration threatens the stability and resiliency of Arizona's agriculture industry.

We welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and a true group of rural water users in an open and honest process to advance solutions to agreed upon challenges to accommodate the differences in hydrological and geological conditions across the state.

Sincerely,

Representative Gail Griffin
Senator Sine Kerr
Arizona Cattle Feeders' Association
Arizona Cotton Growers Association
Arizona Farm Bureau
Arizona Farm & Ranch Group
Maricopa County Farm Bureau
Western Growers Association

cc: Tom Buschatzke, Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources
Paul Brierly, Director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture
Robyn Sahid, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Arizona State Land Department
Patrick Adams, Governors Policy Advisor
Chad Campbell, Governors Chief of Staff