

CAGRDR Conservation Program Policy

Program Objective

CAGRDR, through its Conservation Program, will reduce replenishment obligation by developing and promulgating education and messaging relevant to CAGRDR Members, furthering more efficient use of groundwater by existing members, and influencing the actions of new and future water users to lower replenishment demand. Less groundwater use by CAGRDR members, both present and future, means less replenishment obligation for CAGRDR and a corresponding reduction in the volume of water for CAGRDR to acquire. This results in lower costs for CAGRDR members and less competition for increasingly scarce water supplies.

Background

Following the CAWCD Board's adoption of 2004 CAGRDR Plan of Operation, a series of stakeholder meetings and internal efforts ultimately led to the development of a "Staff Proposal for a CAGRDR Conservation Program" in early 2006.¹ The Staff Proposal contained four main components: homeowner and platting authority education, development of partnerships and ongoing collaboration on conservation with other agencies and water providers, a study to investigate water use at CAGRDR Member Lands, and the development of a funding mechanism. The actions contemplated in the Staff Proposal were achieved: educational material was developed regarding membership in the CAGRDR and conservation, CAGRDR began working with state and regional level conservation efforts alongside a grant program, information was gathered on water use and a funding mechanism was secured through a portion of CAGRDR Member Land Enrollment Fees and a portion of the Replenishment Rate.

Emphasis on conservation has been included in many of CAP's Strategic Plans, and the 2022 Strategic Plan tasks staff with a mission to "Enhance public outreach and education regarding the importance of water conservation and groundwater replenishment." The declaration of a Tier 1 shortage on the Colorado River in 2021, a Tier 2A shortage in 2022 and potential for deeper shortages in the future reinforces the need for CAGRDR to continue its Conservation Program while tailoring it for the realities of 2023 and beyond.

Guiding Principles

CAGRDR will leverage the philosophy behind the 2006 Staff Proposal along with lessons learned from more recent efforts in towards conservation in developing conservation actions. Key concepts for the program can be summarized as:

- Focus on Point of Use and Consumer Efforts: Large scale conservation efforts such as demand management, system conservation or agricultural programs are outside the scope of CAGRDR's conservation program. In evaluating specific actions on conservation, CAGRDR shall consider benefits to CAGRDR members that focus on point of use reduction.
- Administratively Sustainable Program: Any actions taken by staff must be well defined, documented and be able to continue with minimal impact on workload.
- Operate Within Existing Authority: Stakeholder comment during the development of the 2006 Staff Proposal included the phrase "Don't be water cops." No additional authority must be needed for any CAGRDR actions, and all expenditures of the program shall comply with current laws and policies on purchasing and procurement. As the Arizona Department of Water Resources develops conservation requirements through new Management Plans, the program shall look to assist water providers with meeting new requirements.
- Continue a Multi-faceted Approach to Conservation: Dedicating efforts to education, lowering replenishment obligation of existing water users and preventing replenishment obligation from future water

¹ <https://library.cap-az.com/documents/board/policies/2006-cagrdr-conservation-program.pdf>

users helps to ensure the maximum number of stakeholders are positively impacted by the Conservation Program.

- Emphasize Partnership and Collaboration: Stakeholder comments also included the phrase “Don’t reinvent the wheel.” CAGR D shall avoid duplicating efforts currently undertaken by water providers to CAGR D Member Lands and Member Service Areas.
- Match Funding Sources with Project Expenses: Staff shall make best efforts to balance revenues with expenses to address sources of replenishment obligation. It is understood that favorable circumstances may dictate opportunistic spending each year.

Specific Actions

Based on the Program Objective and Guiding Principles above, the CAGR D shall undertake or continue the following actions.

- **Financially support Water – Use It Wisely, Arizona’s premier comprehensive community awareness campaign on water use, at the Regional Campaign Steering Committee level.** In working with partners such as SRP and many of Arizona’s largest cities, this embodies the guiding principle of emphasizing partnership as well as supporting an effort that benefits the entire state.
- **Develop and implement an incentive program to reward construction of water efficient facilities in CAGR D Member Lands and Member Service Areas with expected replenishment obligation.** This action demonstrates partnership with Arizona’s homebuilders, while operating within existing regulations and prevents accruing replenishment obligation before it takes place.
- **Support efficient water use in areas of high-water demand.** Parcels identified as “common areas” represent approximately 20 percent of all water delivery to CAGR D Member Lands, while accounting for roughly six percent of all parcels by number. Implementing water audits, leak detection programs, and irrigation monitoring programs serve to increase water use efficiency, allowing common areas to use less water while maintaining the existing landscape.

General Actions

As opportunities and circumstances allow, the CAGR D may elect to pursue activities matching the following categories.

- Developing educational material and targeted messaging for residents of CAGR D Member Lands and Member Service Areas on conservation and the importance of groundwater replenishment.
- Providing educational opportunities for HOA management companies and residents of CAGR D Member Lands and Member Service Areas on ways to lower water use.
- Amplify innovative and creative efforts by providing additional support to winners of competitive grants issued by other organizations when there is a close tie to CAGR D membership.
- Provide financial assistance and administrative support to high-water users interested in turf removal, installation of smart irrigation controllers or similar, small-scale improvement projects.
- Conduct or participate in data collection and analysis to quantify existing water use, potential water savings or other useful information in support of conservation activities.

Additional Actions

Ideas and opportunities beyond those listed above shall be included in the regular update to the CAGR D and Underground Storage Committee on the CAGR D Conservation Program.