

Sun City, Anthem face off over plan for water rates

By Lesley Wright
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Arizona's new water war pits Anthem against Sun City: one of the northwest Valley's newest master-planned communities against one of its oldest.

The battle between young families and retirees was launched before the Arizona Corporation Commission two years ago, and a victor is not expected to emerge until the end of the year.

An administrative judge is taking testimony from thousands of residents who pay water bills to Arizona American Wa-

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Sun City, Anthem face off over water

RATES

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ter. That judge and, ultimately, the Corporation Commission, must determine whether the water company should consolidate rates for eight residential districts and five wastewater districts that sprawl across the state.

Each water district — Sun City, Sun City West, Anthem, Paradise Valley, Agua Fria, Tubac, Mohave and Havasu — charges a different rate. If consolidated, each of the 90,000 residents involved would pay the same rate.

Numbers continue to be crunched, but one thing is clear: If rates were combined, Sun City would pay more and Anthem would pay less.

Anthem residents with three-fourth-inch meters at their homes pay an average \$85 a month for water and sewer, while Sun City residents in 2007 typically paid about \$14 a month.

It's a tricky situation for the Residential Utility Consumer Office, the state agency charged with representing consumer interests in regulatory cases. Agency attorneys cannot represent all districts at once.

"That is exactly the problem," agency director Jodi Jerich said. "This issue of rate consolidation pits one group of Arizona American customers against another."

The consumer-advocacy attorneys have studied the consolida-

tion puzzle, which includes several complex scenarios, and determined that rate consolidation "is not in the public interest under these sets of facts at this time," Jerich said.

That would be good news for the 1,500 Sun City ratepayers who jammed a Corporation Commission site hearing two weeks ago. Sun City rates, the lowest in Arizona, conceivably could jump by 130 percent under the worst-case scenario. The hearing lasted three hours.

"There were no comments in favor," commission spokeswoman Rebecca Wilder said.

"It really bothers us," Marv Worthen, executive director of the Sun City Taxpayers Association, said of consolidation. "We do not think that people who chose to live in Anthem should benefit from Sun City's situation."

Roger Willis, who chairs Anthem's utilities commission, and many other Anthem residents support consolidation. The community has been hit twice with rate increases because of payments due for infrastructure. Some residents said they are suffering from "rate shock."

Consolidation could lower those Anthem rates by more than 50 percent.

Willis advised Sun City to consider its own long-term needs, because Arizona American is estimating that the community will need to upgrade its own system to the

tune of \$25 million. One well the company replaced last year had been dug in 1948.

"It's divisive between us and Sun City," Willis said. "But we've got families that are young and struggling just as much as the Sun City folks on fixed incomes."

The Corporation Commission first asked Arizona American to draft rate-consolidation scenarios in 2008 as a way to stabilize rates, increase reliability and achieve administrative economy.

Since then, evidence and testimony has flowed through the commission's hearing rooms. A number of parties have a say, besides the ratepayers: staff members for the regulatory commission, the water company and the state agency looking out for the public. The administrative judge is likely to take the summer to craft a recommendation, and then the commissioners will debate the issue and take a final vote.

If consolidation is approved, the new rates could start taking effect next year.

Spokesmen for the commission and the water company were reluctant to voice opinions because the issue is before a judge and the rate figures could fluctuate significantly.

Even if consolidation falls through, Anthem and Sun City residents are still on the hook. Arizona American has requested stand-alone rate increases for each.

Pump becomes source of SCW water queries

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A long-abandoned water pump is gaining renewed attention as Sun City West investigates its options for bringing additional water supplies to the community.

Just what condition the pump is in and how much it would cost to get it working are among questions Recreation Centers of Sun City West officials are delving into as they examine that option and several others that could provide renewable water sources.

"It's not just whether the pumps work or whether the lines are intact. It's everything related to that: the condition of the water, how to deliver it," said RCSCW General Manager Mike Whiting.

The pump is part of a water delivery system that Del Webb Corp. gave to the recreation centers in September 1998, according to a quit-claim deed filed with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office.

That's where the certainty ends. Although some Sun City West

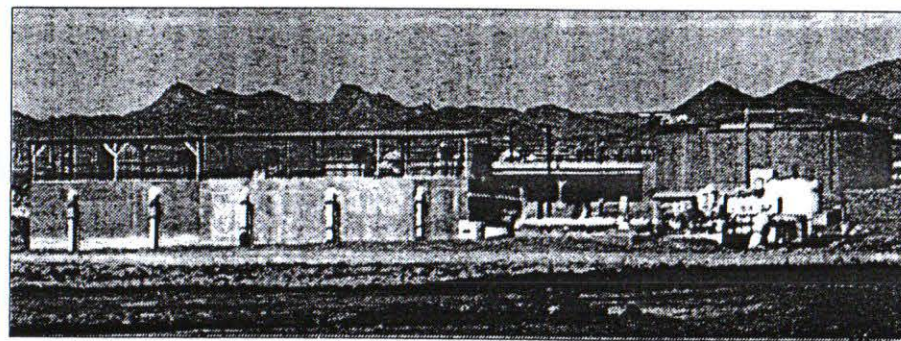
officials believe the pump belongs to the recreation centers, others aren't so sure.

The pump appears to be in the physical possession of Arizona-American Water Co. Carolyn Jennings, who heads RCSCW's Water Committee, said she has seen it at Arizona-American's reclamation facility near Beardsley Road west of 99th Avenue. Piping for the system runs from that plant underneath the Agua Fria River over to El Mirage Road, then along Beardsley Road.

A few years ago, Arizona-American bought Citizens Water Resources, which was Sun City West's water provider at the time of the water system transfer.

Jennings said she's not sure the centers ever owned the pump, and she doesn't believe it would be appropriate for the governing board to operate an effluent plant anyway. Owning the pipelines is enough, she said.

"From what I can tell, the pump now belongs to Arizona-American and the lines belong to us," she said, adding she hasn't been able to verify the



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

This is the Arizona-American's reclamation facility near Beardsley Road west of 99th Avenue. It is the source of several water questions in Sun City West.

information. "The whole situation and who does what and who owns what is very gray."

Carole Hubbs, a former state representative and former RCSCW governing board member who now serves on RCSCW's Water Committee, said she doesn't believe a pump was ever included in the quit-claim deed, meaning it doesn't belong to Sun City West.

Whiting, however, said he believes

the centers owns the whole system, including the pump.

"That was actually done in Del Webb's time, and we actually have a quit-claim deed to that effect," he said.

Dudley Gibson, an RCSCW Water Committee member, said he was looking into the pump's ownership, not as a committee member but as a private

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individual. He served on RCSCW's governing board from 1998 to 2001, but said the effluent system was never an issue until recently.

Gibson said he, too, believes the deed gave the recreation centers all pumps associated with the effluent system.

The deed states Del Webb granted RCSCW all "right, title and interest in and to all pipelines, valves, fittings and other facilities and equipment comprising the non-potable water delivery system for Sun City West."

Kevin Tilden, external affairs director for Arizona-American, said company officials aren't sure who owns the pump. What is known, Tilden said, is the pump isn't operational, but the pipelines appear to be "in reasonably good shape."

"These were used very early on and we did not have good results with them, we think due to the effluent quality," he said. "They've been abandoned for almost 20 years, at least 18 years."

The system was used at one point in an attempt to deliver treated effluent to irrigate some of the community's golf courses. The effluent, however, wasn't treated as thoroughly as it would be today, and the nitrates in the water encouraged algae growth in the irrigation system.

Hubbs said RCSCW used to pay for repairs on the pump and the piping, but she's not sure what shape either is in at this point.

"When they tried it before, it was before they had the tertiary plant, so it just clogged the whole thing up," she said.

Even with today's tertiary treatment plant, it is still unclear if the water could be used directly on the golf courses.

"There's just a lot of unknowns of how it will affect our courses in the future," Whiting said. "But just because there's a lot of

questions doesn't mean it's not an option."

Using the effluent directly on the courses is among a handful of options being considered, with the RCSCW governing board poised to make a decision on one or more sources of water in the near future. Other options include using Central Arizona Project water on the courses, buying additional groundwater pumping rights, or buying additional effluent credits, which also allows the community to continue using groundwater.

Cost estimates to fix the pump vary. Tilden said Arizona-American estimates it would cost about \$50,000 to replace it. "With the age and type of rotary turbine used, we think they are not repairable or salvageable, so they're not usable," he said. "We don't have any specs on pricing, but probably about \$50,000 to replace it."

Whiting said estimates provided by the water company a couple of years ago put the price-tag at about \$355,000 to get the pump operational.

Gibson said he's heard estimates from \$500,000 to \$1 million to get the system up and running.

"The question now, of course, is why will it take a half a million dollars to make the system operational again when it was working when Del Webb turned it over to us," he said.

Whiting said the governing board hasn't yet settled on the effluent system since other options are available. If the board goes that route, though, it will have to first repair the system just to test it to know if it will work. For that reason, seven options are still being considered.

"I'm wide open, and in fact I am going to hire a consultant who is an expert in all of this. He has a lot of experience in the West Valley with this," said Whiting. The centers also has hired an attorney specializing in water issues to help in its decision.

Governor extends SCW water permits

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West residents earned a reprieve from Gov. Janet Napolitano when she signed a bill Monday extending the community's groundwater pumping permits, which are used to irrigate four of Sun City West's seven golf courses.

"This gives us a chance to focus now on securing long-term solutions for Sun City West's water supplies without having to compromise for a short-term answer," said Mike Whiting, general manager of the Recreation Centers of Sun City West.

Napolitano signed House Bill 2720, introduced by Rep. Tom Boone of Glendale in February in an effort to extend the 20-year General Industrial Use permits, which otherwise would have expired in August. The bill was written by former state representative Carole Hubbs of Sun City West, who serves on the Recreation Centers of Sun City West's Water Committee.

Whiting said although the bill allows the Recreation Centers of Sun City West to use its water permits through December 2012, Rec Centers officials plan to continue pursuing renewable water sources to secure the community's future beyond 2012.

"This doesn't mean we've found a permanent solution," he said. "It's just one of many ways we're going to make sure Sun City West has enough water to sustain itself

for decades to come."

One attractive possibility for bringing renewable water to Sun City West is Colorado River water piped in through the Central Arizona Project canal. A Maricopa County Superior Court judge recently ruled on a lawsuit that will enable Sun City West and Sun City to team up on building a pipeline to bring CAP water from the canal to the Sun Cities' golf courses.

"We're hoping all the legal battles are finally over and we can move forward on using CAP water on the golf courses to help preserve the aquifer," said Whiting.

Hubbs said the Arizona Department of Water Resources fully supported House Bill 2720 in large part because it encourages construction of the pipeline to allow the use of CAP water in the Sun Cities, which now rely wholly on groundwater.

"This is something that was always about the aquifer," said Hubbs. "It's just simply being stewards of the land and helping to avoid subsidence."

Subsidence occurs when the ground collapses as too much water is pulled from the aquifer.

Along with extending the permits, the new law also changes deadlines for when the CAP pipeline must be built; that was necessary because the pipeline's construction was held up in the legal battle.

THE WESTER Thursday, April 28, 2005

WATER

101

By Marianne Sikler

A paragraph lost

By Marianne Sikler

A paragraph was unintentionally omitted from last week's Water 101 article, pertaining to the water exchange agreement and costs for delivery of CAP water to Sun City West. It read as follows:

"The cost for CAP water would be 80% of what Sun City West currently pays for pumping its own groundwater, based on each previous year's pumping costs. A figure for yearly pumping costs was estimated at \$300,000 to \$400,000/year."

To clarify the CAP water cost situation: Represented as an even exchange of groundwater for CAP water, Sun City West will 1) relinquish disposition of its water rights to the Arizona American Water Company; 2) face paying delivery costs of some \$240,000 to \$320,000 yearly for 86 years based on each

year's pumping costs (audited and adjusted after the first four years, and every five years thereafter by the water company); 3) continue to pay electrical pumping costs as well as treatment, operating and maintenance costs of the CAP water; and 4) continue to pump groundwater in connection with its delivery due to the high salinity of CAP water.

It is uncertain whether or not the water company will charge

for additional groundwater pumped when necessary, since Sun City West would no longer control any water rights.

In addition, the water company has the right to petition to the Arizona Corporation Commission for a rate increase to the ratepayers of Sun City West, Sun City, and Youngtown after completion of a CAP pipeline, to cover its costs.

A green light for the CAP pipeline?

By Marianne Sikler

In the years-old, ongoing battle to have Sun City residents vote on the water issue, a March 29 ruling handed down by Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Jonathan Schwartz ruled against that possibility. A suit filed by Sun City residents alleged the Recreation Centers of Sun City Board entered into a water exchange contract in conjunction with the construction of a CAP water pipeline that turned over its grandfathered water rights to the water company without an affirmative vote of its membership.

An earlier Court of Appeals ruled that water as an asset was being conveyed under the water exchange agreement, and that the 86-year exchange agreement constituted a contract that had worth. The case was remanded back to the Superior Court to determine the extent of the asset's value. Under Sun City's Articles of Incorporation, an asset with a value of \$50,000 or more would require an affirmative vote of the membership to be conveyed by contract.

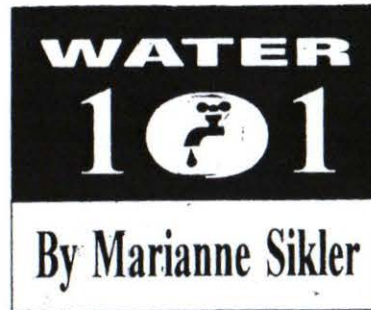
Reactions to the recent decision

were mixed, and raised more questions than answers.

Keith Larson, project manager of Arizona American Water Company (AZ AM) said the water company is pleased with the decision, and intends to go ahead with the construction of a pipeline to deliver CAP water to the Sun Cities. At this point, Larson said AZ AM was "waiting for the appeal window to close" before proceeding with the project, which he thought had a filing deadline of mid-May. "Until that happens, we're just in a wait mode," he said. "Of course if they (the Sun City plaintiffs) decide to appeal, the court proceedings could continue for a while."

Preparing to continue with construction of the pipeline would include a right-of-way study that would be part of the project implementation, but Larson said he didn't anticipate any problems with that.

According to Ray Dare, past president of the Sun City Taxpayers Association (SCTA), any right-of-way permission would also have to come from the rail-



road, since Sun City golf courses earmarked to receive the CAP water lie south of Grand Avenue.

The Northern area has seen rapid development over the past several years that has put more obstacles in any proposed pathway South from Lake Pleasant. Originally proposed as a regional

project, most cities or developments planned or underway in the designated area have since made their own arrangements for a water supply—either planning or building water treatment plants to recycle wastewater, or turning to the state's Hieroglyphic Mountain and Agua Fria recharge facilities to guarantee their needs.

RCSCW Gen. Mgr. Mike Whiting views the court decision as putting the pipeline back in play, and if not challenged, gives Sun City West the opportunity to reconsider that option. "It isn't that we'll select that option, but it's a good option and we need to reconsider it," he said. "We need more information about what that means, how much it will cost to bring it (CAP water) down, and what a new (cost) estimate would be for that pipeline."

Whiting said if the original pipeline plan were to happen, it would have to be a cooperative

effort between Sun City and Sun City West, since neither community could afford to pay it on their own, even with the water company doing the construction.

There's a question of whether the Rec Centers would bear any direct costs for the pipeline, since delivery of the CAP water was being directed to a community asset—the golf courses—and not to homes for residential use. Whiting said he thought that would have to be a Board decision.

Whiting said he realizes the pipeline has to be redesigned, and has spoken with someone who did the original design. He stated the water company has agreed to split the cost of design with Sun City West. It's unclear whether internal Sun City West modifications, or overall design costs are involved, and whether

OVER

Green Light, from Page 2

Sun City would also be obligated to pay for any design costs.

The original Preliminary Engineering Report was contracted and submitted to the Arizona Corporation Commission by the supplier, Citizens (now Arizona American) Water Company.

At a recent Water Committee meeting, Dudley Gibson said, according to his interpretation of the operating agreement, the water company was responsible for making any necessary modifications needed to bring the delivery system into operation. Once in operation, Sun City West's financial responsibility would then include any treatment, operating, and subsequent major repair costs to the system.

An exchange agreement conveys Sun City West's grandfathered groundwater rights to the water company as a trade off for receiving 2,372 acre feet of CAP water to be delivered to the golf courses. An acre foot of water is equal to 325,851 gallons.

Gibson said the agreement gives the water company the right to audit and reassess the charge every four years. He further stated continued groundwa-

ter pumping would be necessary to dilute and leech the high salt content of the CAP water being applied to the golf courses.

Replying to Gibson's statements, Whiting said the 80% charges represented a delivery cost, not the cost of CAP water. He said electrical pumping costs would have to be paid in addition.

By way of background, former Gen. Mgr. Anderson-Wyckoff had also questioned the 80% charges that were to be based on well pumping costs. In a September 2000 assessment letter to the RCSCW Governing Board, Anderson-Wyckoff raised concerns over distribution costs that he thought could increase well beyond any projected 20% cost savings.

Larry Spitz, chairman of the Plaintiff's Committee of residents that filed suit against their Rec Centers board, said the group is disappointed over the court ruling which they regard as a wrong decision for many reasons. He didn't confirm the group would file an appeal, but said they planned to meet this week to study options.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2005

DAILY NEWS-SUN

Weather delays and a few complaints aside, all's well in Sun City West

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

In the quiet little cul-de-sac of Daisy Court, where there's little activity outside the well-maintained homes, a mass of machinery has set up shop.

With a drilling rig alone weighing 90,000 pounds, the cumbersome equipment is capping an old, worn out water well and digging a new one to keep groundwater flowing to Sun City West residents.

"The old well was drilled in 1946. It did pretty well," said Mike Domanico, an engineer with Manera Inc., a Paradise Valley consulting company contracted by Arizona-American Water Co. to head the project. "Anytime you can build anything that'll last you 50 years, you've done pretty well."

The old well sits only about 50 feet from where the new well is being drilled inside a fenced area, making for a tight fit for all the equipment. Manera has contracted with WDC Exploration and Wells to drill the new well and perform all accompanying water and well testing.

Work originally was set to begin Feb. 15, but started about a week ago and is scheduled to last about 45 days.

"We had a lot of weather delays just due to the fact we couldn't get the equipment off the other job sites," Domanico said.

The equipment includes the 90,000 pound drilling rig, which is on its maiden project.

"We had to go around and scratch it with a screwdriver just so it didn't look so new,"

Domanico said.

The equipment has drawn a lot of attention from curious neighbors, he said, but the individuals he's spoken with have been understanding about the noise. Sound walls were installed around the site before work began.

"This rig is very quiet. It's state of the art," he said. "It's an extremely quiet job as far as we can possibly do it."

But Bob Jones, PORA's director in charge of water, roads, traffic and safety, said he has received some complaints from residents on Stonebrook Drive, which is on the other side of the well. "These people were complaining about noise and vibration from the well," he said.

Jones said he has contacted the contractor and advised them they may want to purchase a seismic monitor to gauge the noise levels.

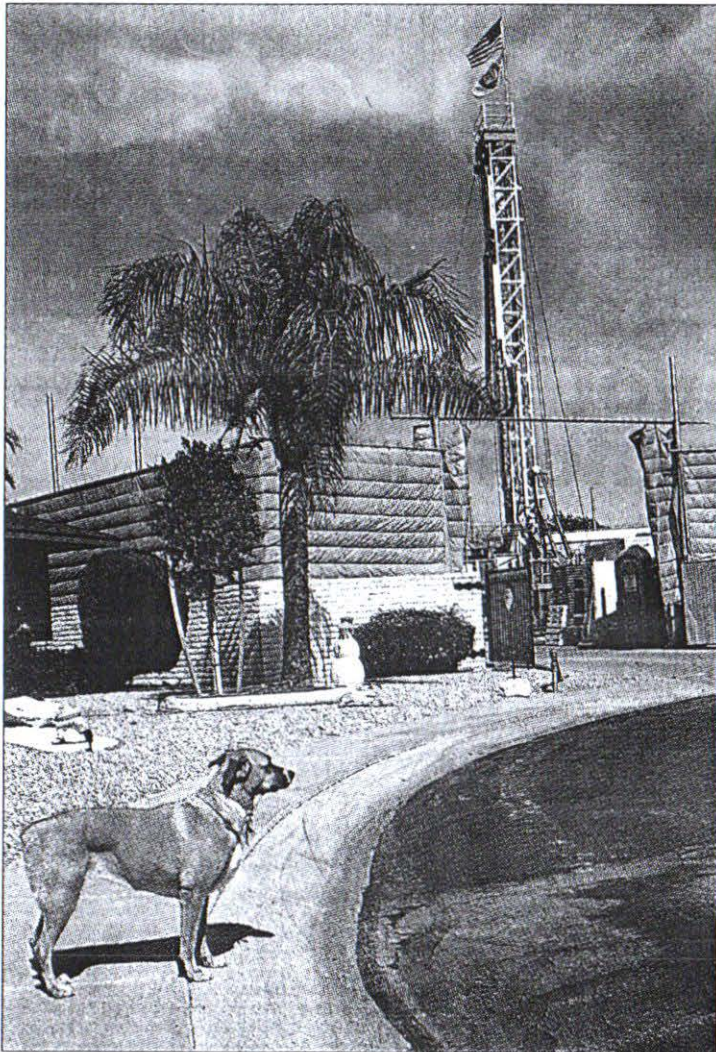
LeRoy Wentz, whose home abuts the well site, said he hasn't been disturbed by the drilling.

"It's noisy, but it doesn't bother me," he said.

Once the project is in full gear, the drill will be working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Domanico said.

The wells are located at the end of Daisy Court, just off Spanish Garden Drive between R.H. Johnson and Camino del Sol boulevards. Covenant Presbyterian Church lies on the opposite side of Spanish Garden.

Domanico said his crew does soil sampling every 10 feet and water sampling every 200 feet to ensure the quality of the well and the water.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sidney, a boxer mix owned by LeRoy Wentz, watches the goings on in his Sun City West neighborhood where a water well is being drilled.

THE WESTER Thursday, February 17, 2005

AAW to drill replacement well in SCW

Arizona-American Water (AAW) will be replacing their well located on the vacant lot at the end of Daisy Court. This replacement is required because the original well, acquired by Del Webb when the property was purchased, has a collapsed-casing failure which prevents its production of water.

A rotary drilling rig, owned by WDC Exploration and Wells (WDC), the contracted driller, is expected to be on location about Feb. 15. The first work WDC will perform is the plugging and abandonment of the collapsed-casing well. This work will be done on weekdays between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Actual drilling of the new well will commence when the old well is plugged. Drilling the new well will be done on a 24 hour-seven day per week schedule. All work on the new well is projected to be completed by the end of April, 2005.

The drilling operation will be supported by four dump trucks, a fuel truck, three supply trucks and three crew trucks per 12 hour shift. In addition, water from the drilling operation will be piped down Daisy Court to

Spanish Garden where it will enter the road storm drain system, which is a paved invert. It will flow down Spanish Garden to a drainage canal located between Bob White and Lasso Drives.

AAW has secured the necessary permits from regulatory agencies to do this work. All land owners directly impacted by this work on Daisy Court, Spanish Garden, Hyacinth Drive, Azurite Drive and Bob White Drive will be contacted by AAW with a written explanation of the work.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 2, 2005

Sun City West hits lost water pump site

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West continues to investigate renewable sources of water, but at least one question has been resolved.

Centers officials have verified the location of long-abandoned water pumps they might consider using again. Recreation Centers of Sun City West General Manager Mike Whiting said the pump is at Arizona-American Water Co.'s Northwest Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility near Beardsley Road west of 99th Avenue.

"The lost pumps are no longer lost. They're there," he told RCSCW Water Committee members Tuesday.

Whiting and Todd Patty, RCSCW's environmental services manager, managed to snag photos of the pumps, but only after haggling with Arizona-American employees at the facility who didn't want any pictures taken.

"Their concern is really terrorism," Whiting said.

The pictures show the pumps' existence, but not their condition. That would have to be determined if the centers' decides to use them

From A1

to run treated effluent back to the community's golf courses.

In addition, Whiting estimates two new pumps and a well would have to be built depending on which water options the center chooses. And if effluent is used, the centers must determine what effect it will have on the golf courses since it contains higher salt and mineral content.

"I'm not convinced direct delivery of effluent is the way to go," Whiting said, adding effluent will seep back into the groundwater supply. "What happens to that water source in 30 years? There's a lot of pharmaceuticals in that water that weren't there before."

Along with treated effluent, other options include using Central Arizona Project water, which comes from the Colorado River through a canal running from Lake Havasu to an area beyond Tucson.

Committee member J.B. Wyckoff said he believes a combination of effluent and CAP water would make Sun City West "virtually water

independent."

Committee members discussed whether Arizona-American or Pulte Homes, which bought Del Webb Corp., should help RCSCW pay the cost of building additional pumps or repairing its old ones.

"I think it's both Webb's and the water company's responsibility to give us what we need and they haven't provided," said committee member Bob Jones.

Whiting said the committee should focus on finding a solution before working out details on financial responsibility.

"You seem to be vilifying the water company. No matter what option we select, we're going to have to work with the water company," he said. "I think we ought to think about how we work together to get the job done. I think who does what and who pays for what is secondary."

The latter involves legal matters that can be ironed out later, he said.

Committee Chairman Carolyn Jennings said she believes the committee "ought to be motivated by

self-interest for the recreation centers. We don't mean to denigrate the water company."

Committee member Dudley Gibson also suggested the committee determine where the easements are for water lines owned but not currently used by the centers. The pipes could be punctured during construction planned throughout the region, with Sun City West officials not discovering the damage for years.

The lack of information on easements brought up another struggle the committee faces -- lack of background material and records from previous committee and board members.

"We're constantly in change," said Jennings. "It's unfortunate that we don't have archives for many of our committees, with water the most important, I think."

The water committee's next meeting is 9 a.m. March 1 in the governing board room of the centers' administrative offices, 19803 R.H. Johnson Boulevard.

Katy O'Grady may be reached at 876-2514 or kograd@aztrib.com.

See PUMP, A5

Sun City West ponds a popular snack

Animals cause seepage with steady shore chewing

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

One nip at a time, Sun City West's wildlife is taking its toll on the community's lakes.

The Recreation Centers of Sun City West's golf course ponds have been losing water to seepage in areas eroded by ducks, geese and other wildlife chewing away at the shores.

Todd Patty, the centers' environmental services manager, said centers staff had been looking into dropping levels at the lakes to determine where the water was going. The major problem

appears to be the erosion at the top several feet of the lakes rather than the lakes' lining farther down, which still seems to be holding up.

"We get that real quick drop-off and then they're leveling off," he said. "Some of the irrigation heads are in the water now instead of the turf, so that gives you an idea of how much lake shore we've lost."

At the 12th hole of Echo Mesa Golf Course, for example, Patty estimates the center is losing about 20 acre-feet of water a year due to the erosion.

One acre-foot is 325,851 gallons, or about enough to supply a family of four for a year.

Sun City recently reported problems with its lake linings, but Sun City West's liners, which use a vegetable-based coating called ESS-13, still have at least a decade of wear and tear left in them.

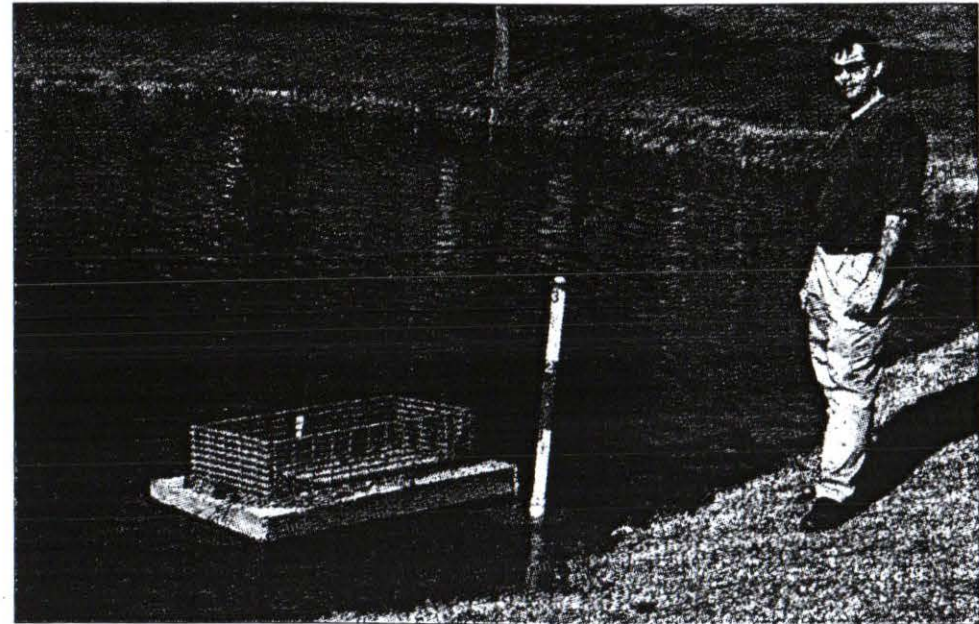
According to Seepage Control Inc., which manufactures the Environmental Soil Sealant formula, ESS-13 can be added to lakes that are full or empty, and the formula is considered permanent. Traditional liners such as Bentonite last about 20 to 25 years.

To repair the eroded sections, centers staff could add ESS-13 to the upper sections of the lakes and build retaining walls, but no decision has been made yet.

"It's a long-term problem. It's good news that we probably have 10 or 15 years left on these liners," said RCSCW General Manager Mike Whiting.

Members of RCSCW's Water Committee questioned at Tuesday's committee meeting how much it would cost to replace or repair the lakes' linings.

See POND, A5



MOLLIE J. HOPPE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Echo Mesa Golf Course superintendent Greg Williams said the sides of the pond on the 12th hole are eroding from wind whipping the water for 20 years. Water is seeping out of the sides where the edges and bottom dirt haven't been treated.

From A1

Patty said centers' staff originally thought the linings were made of Bentonite, so any cost estimates included in the recently completed asset study would be flawed.

"They had the wrong information," said committee Chair Carolyn Jennings.

Whiting said once staff determines how to address the problem over the long haul, money can be set aside in the budget over a period of years to handle the cost. The most damaged lakes will be repaired first.

'That rain water all runs off and it goes to Corte Bella. I don't know what they're doing with it.'

**Todd Patty
environmental services manager**

"We'll do this in a systematic way," he said.

The centers is in the process of trying to secure new water supplies while conserving where it can, so all areas of

water use are being investigated.

On a positive note, Patty said the staff has found a way to recover excess water from Echo Mesa's back nine, which usually flood when it rains.

"That rain water all runs off and it goes to Corte Bella. I don't know what they're doing with it," he said.

Pumping the extra water and storing it in another area not only saves the water but allows Echo Mesa's back nine to remain open after heavy rains.

"So we get the revenue and we get to bank the water that normally would be running over to Corte Bella," he said.

THE WESTER Thursday, January 13, 2005

Residents hear about water at 'Backyard' Meeting

General manager gives residents first glimpse of options menu

By Marianne Sikler

Mike Whiting, general manager of the RCSCW, took his "water" presentation to the Backyard meeting last week. Before an audience that filled the R. H. Johnson Social Hall, Whiting laid out options available for meeting the shortage of water resources faced by the community due to the expiration of General Industrial Use (GIU) permits used to irrigate four of its golf courses.

As a prelude to listing the options, Whiting presented an overview of the community's available resources. Each of the seven golf courses is served by a well. In addition to the four expiring GIU permits, the community owns three Type I, and one Type II grandfathered water rights which are permanent under state law.

Also available to the community is 1,000 acre feet of effluent credits. The effluent is derived from wastewater generated in Sun City West, treated at the Arizona American Water Company (AZ-AM) treatment plant, and released into the aquifer. The effluent credits are charged against groundwater pumping at the Deer Valley and Desert Trails golf courses.

Whiting said the community consumed a total of 10,653 acre feet, or 3.4 billion gallons of groundwater last year for all its needs. Of that, 6,849 acre feet, or 64% was used for domestic use. The recreation centers facilities used 182 acre feet, or 2.6% of that amount. Golf course irrigation accounted for 3,804 acre feet, or 36%. An acre foot of water is equal to 325,851 gallons.

The GIU permits that need to be replaced represent 25% of the amount of water needed to irrigate the golf courses.

Suggested alternative replacement sources include the use of Central Arizona Project (CAP) water, effluent or the purchase or lease of additional water rights.

Sun City West has an effluent

agreement with the water company to purchase additional effluent. Effluent could be used in two ways: direct delivery to the golf courses, or as "paper" credits against the pumping of groundwater. Direct delivery would involve costs of \$150 an acre foot/year, plus upfront capital costs of some \$500,000 to bring the effluent into the community.

The purchase of effluent credits would allow treated wastewater from the plant to be recharged back into the aquifer. No capital costs would be needed with this option, since treated water would go directly from settlement ponds already in place, back into the aquifer. Sun City West would continue to pump groundwater against the credits.

Both effluent options would be a permanent solution. The direct delivery is considered more environmental-friendly. Cost is subject to escalation. Operational costs would be high due to the high salinity content of effluent and its impact on golf course grass and plantings. Groundwater pumping would still be needed to dilute its salts.

The CAP pipeline, or Beardsley option, represents the highest cost. It would bring CAP water directly into the community from the West Side, and require infrastructure costs for a pipeline to deliver the CAP Water. The water company would front capital costs, which would then be passed on to ratepayers.

There was some confusion over costs with this option. In answer to a question posed by Dudley Gibson, it was acknowledged that pursuant to the original pipeline agreement, the Rec. Centers would pay to the water company a charge per acre foot of water received in an amount equal to 80% of the power costs for pumping groundwater, billed monthly, and ratepayers would pay 20% through rates. The agreement also calls for periodic cost adjustments.

This option would be subject to availability of CAP water. It could have a negative impact on landscaping due to its high total solids content, could necessitate some groundwater pumping, and would require a resizing of the internal golf course piping system.

Whiting referred only generally to estimated costs, which may have been underestimated with this option since they appear to be based on 1998 cost estimates associated with the original preliminary pipeline engineering plan now in litigation. The original plan was to bring CAP water down from Lake Pleasant to both Sun Cities—an option too expensive for Sun City West to pay for on its own.

Another option briefly discussed by Whiting was the purchase or lease of Type II water rights. Of the two options, purchasing rights would be preferable as a permanent solution, at an estimated cost of \$1 million. The water rights would become a company asset and increase in value over time. Operations would remain unchanged as Sun City West continues pumping its own water.

Whiting attempted to answer a wide range of questions. Water committee members took the opportunity to put forth their personal views on the water issue. Carolyn Jennings wants Sun City West to appeal to altruism, and focus on using effluent or CAP water as a replenishment source. Bob Jones only prefers the option that "will get us off the pump." Harvey Lorenz expressed concern about "fugitive" water runoff. Tom Cook urged condo and homeowners association members to attend a series of programs he's planning, to demonstrate ways water can be conserved.

Some of the associations are already coming up with conservation programs. According to attendee Bob Gottlieb, his Terrace West association is picking

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up the cost for members to convert from grass to desert landscaping. The association has 82 homes and to date, 54 have converted to desert landscaping. The landscaper charges \$300 for converting 500 sq. ft., and \$500 for larger areas.

The program has been in effect since 2002, and members have until December 2005 to opt into it. The association expects to break even for its costs within three years due to the savings in water costs, especially in view of the water rate increases recently put into effect.

A resident commented on the 18 ft. subsidence around Luke Air Force base, questioning if Sun City West faces such an occurrence.

The subsidence at Luke is an extraordinary situation confined to that area. It can be traced to the Morton Salt Company, which is solution mining and has been pumping under grandfathered water rights to five wells since 1987. Its huge salt caverns permeate the area. The company uses 714 acre feet, or 232 million gallons of water per year. The wells are drilled to 3,000 and 4,000 feet, and pump 700 gallons per minute during operation.

Luke is situated over 1/4 of the company's 450-acre facility. Its subsidence has since been leveled off and ceased through the efforts of the Corps of Engineers to reshape the area around the base and build a golf course as a holding pond for drainage.

It can safely be said Sun City West will never face the kind of subsidence experienced by Luke.

Referring to the increase of new developments, another resident questioned Sun City West discontinuing its pumping "while somebody else out there is doing it."

Whiting said any new community that comes on line has to have a replenishment source to replace the water it pumps out of the ground.

He said subsidence has to be put into perspective. The GIUs that have to be replaced represent only 9% of the total water used in Sun City West—an amount that wouldn't have much impact on subsidence.

Whiting intends to carry his message on the water issued throughout the community—preferably speaking to smaller groups where it's easier to communicate more individually with people.

THE WESTER Thursday, December 16, 2004

General manager sizes up SCW community's water needs

Costs to secure adequate water supply to hit residents in the pocketbook

By Marianne Sikler

Gen. Mgr. Mike Whiting laid out some straight talk at the RCSCW Water Committee meeting last week, concerning the water situation in Sun City West.

Whiting referred to the expiration in August 2005 of temporary permits used to irrigate four of the community's golf courses as being the most critical issue facing the community. Extension of the permits out to 2012 is tied to legislation enacted as part of a pipeline proposal to bring Central Arizona Project (CAP) water to the Sun Cities—currently in-

involved in a lawsuit filed by Sun City residents over a water exchange agreement in connection with it.

Whiting feels Sun City West can no longer delay a decision for a ready alternative. "Our time has run out, basically," he said, referring to a potential shortfall of water resources needed to irrigate all the community's golf courses.

In a power point presentation, Whiting gave an extensive overview of Sun City West's water usage, and outlined a variety of options available to the community to meet its future water

needs.

Whiting first defined current needs and usage. Total Sun City West groundwater use was stated as 10,653 acre feet, or 3.4 billion gallons of groundwater per year. Of that, the Rec. Centers use about 182 acre feet of water, or 2.6%, to meet the needs of the community's recreational facilities.

In 2004, Sun City West expects to use 3,804 acre feet of groundwater on its golf courses, compared to an average 6,849 acre feet of water consumed for domestic use. An acre foot of water is equal to 325,851 gallons,

or enough water to supply 2-1/2 Sun City West homes for one year.

At present, Sun City West is being served by three kinds of water resources: General Industrial Use (GIU) permits, Grandfathered Type 1 and Type 2 water rights, and effluent rights used for two Sun City West golf courses. At issue are the expiring GIU rights that has sparked the necessity for acquiring alternative water resources as their replacement. The GIUs represent 9% of all water used in Sun City West.

Whiting's presentation identified a menu of alternatives available to the community to meet the projected 9% shortfall, listing

the advantages and disadvantages of each. All alternatives listed will prove costly to residents in varying amounts for water and/or capital costs.

Suggested water resource alternatives include:

1. Purchase of grandfathered "Type 2 water rights. In this case rights are purchased from someone who now holds Type 2 rights. This purchase would enable Sun City West to keep pumping groundwater, while wells are being turned off elsewhere. Advantages: A permanent solution. Rights become a legal Rec. Center asset with the potential to increase in value. Uninterrupted operating procedures. Disadvantages: All purchase costs upfront. Considered environmentally unfriendly to continue pumping groundwater.

2. Leasing grandfathered Type 2 groundwater rights. This option would provide Sun City West with the ability to continue pumping groundwater on a temporary basis. Advantages: Unin-

terrupted operating procedures. Represents second lowest water costs, and lowest cost for an interim solution until permanent source is established. Disadvantages: No assurance of long term availability, and rates subject to escalation as value of water rights increases.

3. The use of effluent. This option would bring treated wastewater back to Sun City West for use on golf courses. Advantages: Represents a permanent solution. Agreement to deliver treated effluent already in place. Mid-range pay as you go costs. Regulatory agencies prefer its use in lieu of groundwater pumping. Considered environmentally-friendly. Can be in place in 2005.

Disadvantages: Problem of high salinity. Can impact golf courses, present operation and maintenance problems. Costs estimated to increase approximately 1.5% year. Federal gov-

See **SCW water**,
Page 2

ernment can add to costs by setting more restrictions on managing salt content. Moderate, but upfront capital costs. Would require additional groundwater pumping to dilute and leech the effect of salt on golf courses.

4. Purchasing additional effluent credits. With this option Sun City West could continue to use groundwater, charging it against water company's production of treated wastewater. Advantages: Effluent agreement already in place and being used in Sun City West. Permanent solution. Operating procedures remain unchanged. Pay as you go, mid-range yearly costs. The effluent would be added to recharge facilities, not delivered. Disadvantages: Rates subject to increases.

5. Receiving Central Arizona Project (CAP) water from the Beardsley Canal. This option would allow Sun City West to connect with the canal already delivering CAP water from Lake Pleasant to farmers in Southwest Arizona. Advantages: No additional costs for water; already paid for by Sun City West ratepayers. Capital costs would be paid for by ratepayers. Permanent solution. Represents the only viable option that keeps Sun City West from pumping groundwater. Considered environmentally-friendly. Disadvantages: Capital costs high. Need to establish a pump connection.

Present golf course pumping system not adequate to handle. Can't be in place by August 2005.

6. A CAP pipeline from Lake Pleasant directly to Sun City West. Advantages: No water cost; already paid for in water rates. Permanent solution. Considered environmentally-friendly. Subject to approval of Arizona Corporation Commission. Disadvantages: Capital costs the highest. Could be subject to legal challenge. Substantial cost to Sun City West going it alone. Can't be in place by 2005.

7. Buying water from Arizona American Water Company. Advantages: Immediate solution. No purchase of water rights required. No capital costs (wells in place; would in fact be pumping the community's own groundwater). Could represent permanent solution. Pay as you go. Disadvantages: Water cost highest, up to four times the amount of all other options. Rates could increase.

Whiting has made the presentation to the RCSCW Board for its consideration. Residents will learn more details and become fully informed about the alternatives and costs through a series of public sessions Whiting intends to make throughout the community, starting with a Rec. Center PR Committee "Backyard" session on Jan. 8.

Water decisions loom in Sun City West

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Most every Sun City Wester knows water is in short supply in the desert, but soon they'll learn how their governing board intends to ensure their community has enough of the precious resource.

Recreation Centers of Sun City West directors likely will choose from a list of seven options suggested by General Manager Mike Whiting to address the community's future water needs. All of the suggestions will affect residents' pocketbooks to varying degrees.

Whiting said he intends to

present the options to the community in a few weeks, and he hopes to continue presenting it to golfing groups and others who are interested in order to educate as many residents as possible before the board makes a decision.

"Our most critical issue I think is water right now," Whiting told the RCSCW Water Committee on Tuesday during a presentation outlining the problems and options. "Our time has run out basically."

The major problem facing Sun City West is that its ability to pump groundwater to irrigate four of its seven golf courses may be cut off in August with the expiration of

its 25-year General Industrial Use permits.

The permits will be extended until 2012 if a pipeline is built to bring Central Arizona Project water to Sun City West and Sun City. That project, however, is tied up in a lawsuit involving the Recreation Centers of Sun City that isn't scheduled to go to court until March. The lawsuit's outcome could mean an end to the pipeline project, and therefore an end to the permits' extension.

RCSCW Water Committee member Carole Hubbs, who also represents District 4 in the Arizona House of Representatives, is working through the House's water

committee on which she serves to get a three-year extension of the GIU permits.

That extension would be necessary if the pipeline project falls through or if Sun City West forsakes the pipeline project altogether — choosing instead to find its own renewable water sources rather than wait for Sun City to resolve its lawsuit.

"So if we make a move (on another option), we're terminated," said RCSCW Director Carolyn Jennings, who chairs the centers' water committee.

"Which is not the end of the world," added Bob Jones, who chairs the Property

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Water Option Comparisons		
	Water Cost	Capital Cost
	Low	High
Purchase groundwater rights		
Effluent credits in exchange for groundwater	Moderate	None
Lease groundwater rights	Low	None
Arizona-America Water Co. service	High	None
"Real" effluent for direct irrigation	Moderate	Low
CAP from canal	None	High
Sun Cities pipeline plan	None	High

For explanations of the options, see page A5

Source: RCSCW

Daily News-Sun

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Owners and Residents Association Water Committee.

RCSCW Water Committee member Aubrey Noble added sarcastically, "It might be the end of a few golf courses for a while."

Whiting presented a wide range of options to ensure such a worst-case scenario doesn't occur. They include purchasing grandfathered groundwater pumping rights; leasing grandfathered groundwater pumping rights; purchasing additional effluent credits, which would allow for more groundwater pumping in exchange for effluent recharged elsewhere; purchasing additional water from Arizona-American Water Co.; using treated effluent to irrigate the golf courses; bringing in CAP water through the existing Beardsley Canal; or bringing in CAP water through the yet-to-be-built pipeline or another in the same area.

The options using CAP water are the only ones that would replace groundwater pumping altogether, and residents already are paying for

the water.

Of the seven options, Whiting said the three most promising ones appear to be bringing in CAP water through the Beardsley Canal, working with Arizona-American to purchase additional effluent credits and purchasing new groundwater pumping rights.

Whiting said each option would have various water and capital costs, with some being upfront costs and others offering a pay-as-you-go alternative.

Along with the price tag, other issues RCSCW directors must consider in choosing one or more options is how their decision will affect Sun City West's image, how it will affect the environment, whether it will require changes to the centers operations, whether it is a permanent or temporary solution, and whether it requires approval from the Arizona Department of Water Resources or Arizona Corporation Commission.

As for its image, Sun City West is seen at the Legislature as being concerned only about short-term, low-cost, local solutions, according to some committee members. So

choosing an option that continues to take groundwater from the aquifer could reflect poorly on the community. Hubbs said it might also dissuade the Legislature from approving the three-year groundwater permit extensions.

On the other hand, choosing a more aquifer-friendly option such as using treated effluent on the golf courses could lead to soil problems and additional costs down the road since even highly treated effluent is salty and can damage turf conditions. Then there are the options with high capital costs, such as building pipelines to import CAP water, which may not sit well with ratepayers.

Given the complexity of the choices, some committee members were concerned that the nine-member governing board is unqualified to make the decision, which will affect not only Sun City West residents but those in surrounding communities as well.

"They don't have any experience in this," Hubbs said.

Whiting said that was the reason he created the presentation. But Jones suggested

the decision might be better left up to residents in a membership vote.

In his presentation, Whiting illustrated how little water the centers actually use compared to Sun City West as a whole.

In 2004, for example, the centers is projected to use about 3,804 acre-feet of groundwater. (An acre-foot is 324,851 gallons or enough to supply 2½ Sun City West homes for a year.) In comparison, residential use accounts for about 6,849 acre-feet. All told, Sun City West is expected to consume 10,653 acre-feet or 3.4 billion gallons of water this year.

Stacked in one-gallon containers, Whiting said, "That would reach to the moon and back again and around the earth seven times."

The community's water needs currently are quenched by three different sources: the GIU or groundwater pumping rights; permanent, grandfathered pumping rights; and treated effluent.

"The most important thing is to get off the pump. Period," Jones said.

Water issues stimulate special session

RCSCW board goes behind closed doors

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Options to cinch RCSCW's future water supplies will be considered during a closed meeting Thursday afternoon.

The Recreation Centers of Sun City West governing board will hear a presentation by centers General Manager Mike Whiting outlining the

various options.

Attending the Property Owners and Residents Association's Water Committee meeting Tuesday, Whiting said all of the options will cost the centers, although he did not have a range of prices.

Thursday's 2 p.m. meeting is an executive session, meaning it is closed to the community because legal issues will be discussed, according to the governing board. Whiting said he did not believe the board would vote on a final option Thursday.

Sun City West's General Industrial Use permits, which allow the

centers to pump groundwater to irrigate most of the community's golf courses, are set to expire Aug. 2. RCSCW and PORA officials have been scrambling to find new water sources, while also trying to get the Legislature to extend the permits.

Whiting told PORA Water Committee members that the centers isn't the major groundwater user in Sun City West. The centers uses about 3,400 acre-feet of groundwater per year, compared to about 6,800 acre-feet used by residents annually. One acre-foot is 325,851 gallons, or about enough to supply a family of four for a year.

Of all the potable water in Sun City West, the centers uses about 2.9 percent, he said.

Whiting also said Sun City West residents generate about 2,600 acre-feet of effluent each year, meaning most of its water is going into the ground through irrigation, either at the recreation centers or at homes and condominiums.

"So there's a great opportunity to save water there," he said.

Whiting said he hopes to educate residents about the future water options so they are prepared when the board does decide which one to choose.

"The decisions we'll have to make in the next couple of months will cost us money," he said.

Rep. Carole Hubbs of Sun City West, R-District 4, said she believes the Legislature will approve an extension of the community's GIU permits.

Hubbs, who also serves on the PORA Water Committee, said legislators "don't know the difference between Sun City West and Sun City, and they kind of tie us all together." Sun City West should therefore set itself apart by

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committing to use its CAP allocation.

The Recreation Centers of Sun City board of directors is embroiled in a lawsuit filed by a group of residents who want to force a membership vote on construction of a pipeline to bring CAP water to the Sun Cities.

Hubbs said unless Sun City West wants to agitate the Legislature, it must commit to using its CAP allocation if it asks for the groundwater pumping permits to be extended.

"(Legislators') fear, if they extend the GIU rights, is that we'll use it as another opportunity to do nothing," Hubbs

said. "If we do get it through and then choose not to use the CAP water — oh boy. If no one plans to use it, then let's get on with it and do something else."

In other news from Tuesday's PORA Water Committee meeting:

● Keith Larson, water resources manager with Arizona-American Water Co., introduced Sally Ceccarelli-Wolf as the company's new liaison to the committee meetings.

Ceccarelli-Wolf, formerly with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, is a water resource analyst with Arizona-American.

"So she's making the switch from water quality to

water quantity," Larson said.

● Todd Patty, RCSCW's environmental services manager, announced the centers will be transitioning about 1¼ acres of turf into desert landscaping in the next couple of weeks. The work is part of an ongoing effort to transform grass into low-water-use landscaping in certain parts of the golf courses.

"It's not a huge area, but we keep ticking away at it," Patty said. "We're putting together a five-year plan right now and most of the projects on there are converting turf to desert landscaping."

This transition will cost about \$6,000 per acre, Patty said, but the costs at various courses can vary depending

on how much work is required at each site.

● Committee Chairman Bob Jones said he was tracking a contact in the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in order to begin a program to start citing residents and businesses that let irrigation water run down the community's streets.

Carolyn Jennings, who chairs RCSCW's Water Committee but attends both groups' meetings, said she believes most so-called fugitive water comes from condominium associations.

The PORA Water Committee's next meeting is 9 a.m. Dec. 28, in the Camino Room at PORA, 13815 Camino del Sol, Sun City West.

Anatomy of the SCW water issue

The Wester is receiving calls and letters requesting a series of articles to better explain and inform residents on the water issue. As one person so colorfully described the need, "There's some 'splainin' to do" to the residents, and they prefer it to be done in terms that can be easily understood.

In view of the increased interest, The Wester, as a public service, has initiated a column devoted to the water issue.

"Water 101" is an ongoing informational column. Its purpose is to report on any and all water activities and events that arise and affect the community.

Future columns will include, but not be limited to, the activities of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Arizona Corporation Commission, Sun City and Sun City West Recreation Centers, Sun City Taxpayers Association, Central Arizona Project (CAP), and the Arizona-American Water Company.

What role do each of these involved entities play in any action or controversy surrounding the water issue?

Time for the end game — the semester winds down

A newly restructured SCW Rec Centers' Water Committee held a productive first meeting last week, after being split off from its connection with PORA's water conservation group.

The committee was reformed at the insistence of Recreation Centers board Pres. Ray Caldwell, after discussions with PORA Pres. Chuck Ullman. Caldwell and Ullman discussed the operation and membership of the combined committee efforts, and questioned whether their organizations were being adequately served through the liaison.

To better meet the needs of each organization, the PORA water committee will address residential and business water conservation needs, with the Rec Centers water committee concentrating on water issues associated with its recreational facilities and the irrigation needs of the community's golf courses.

Caldwell's decision to concentrate efforts on water resources was a wise one, judging from the first meeting where a scaled-down membership zeroed in on discussion of how Sun City West could find alternative water resources to cover an impending shortfall of four water rights.

Committee Chair Carolyn Jennings assigned committee members to three "teams" charged with studying and reporting on various sources of water: Central Arizona Project (CAP) water, effluent, and the purchase of water rights. Team members were requested to study their assigned issues and report findings to the committee for discussion.



Arlene Christensen drew the assignment of compiling the costs from all recreational facilities and entering them into a spreadsheet to gauge actual costs. Golf course irrigation costs will also be assimilated into the figures, and there is talk of using the concluded report as part of the community's long-range planning efforts.

According to Gen. Mgr. Mike Whiting, the Recreation Centers and facilities account for the highest amount of water usage in the community, with consumption of approximately 6,000 acre feet of potable water used in all buildings, clubs, swimming pools, showers, washrooms, in maintenance, etc. Golf course irrigation requires approximately 4,000 acre feet, which puts total community water usage at around 10,000 acre feet. An acre foot of water equals 325,851 gallons.

The newly-resurrected water committee has seven members. Besides Jennings and Christensen, other members include Bob Jones, Bob Coates, J.B. Wycoff, Aubrey Noble (rep-

resenting Briarwood) Dudley Gibson and Carole Hubbs. Jones and Hubbs claim an 11-year membership in the water committee. Mike Whiting, and Todd Patty participate as non-voting members.

The small membership and open format of the newly-formed committee is a stark contrast to a past make-up of committee members, which numbered as many as 17 people and included a Glendale attorney and several water company employees.

Dudley Gibson as a committee member is a refreshing addition. Gibson doesn't hesitate to raise the tough questions.

Gibson offered several points for consideration. One concern was how to save substantially more water than is currently being done through measures taken by Patty to reduce golf course maintenance. It was suggested a determination be made of how to control costs, yet keep the golf courses in a playable and satisfactory condition, which would be a factor in the event Sun City West had to purchase water rights to meet its needs.

This is a significant concern. Each water right is restricted in the number of acre feet that can be pumped to irrigate the community's golf courses. Patty, environmental services manager, said despite conservation efforts made to operate within limitations, he anticipates some golf courses may be over their water allotment. Patty said that could mean having to purchase water credits to make up any difference.

Sun City West has exceeded allotments in the past by 46 acre feet, and had to purchase water from the water company for \$150 an acre foot vs. pumping the community's own water at a cost of \$4.87 an acre foot.

Gibson referred to a Sun City lawsuit against its recreation board. Sun City taxpayers are suing their rec board for enacting a water exchange agreement that turns over its water rights to the Arizona American Water Company in conjunction with building a pipeline to deliver CAP water to the Sun Cities, a decision they claim should have been brought to the membership for a vote. A court case to decide the issue will be heard in Superior

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Court on March 5, 2005.

Gibson said if sending the issue back to the Sun City membership results in the agreement being voted down, "building a pipeline at a cost of \$15 million or more just to deliver Sun City West's portion of the CAP is not a viable solution for us, for the rate base, or for the water company."

Citing recent publicity in the papers about the drought, and the possibility of legislative changes that could result in a diminished availability of CAP water in the future, Gibson questioned whether or not CAP water could be used as a long-term, dependable solution. Further, he questions if the contract the Board has agreed to accept is still a valid document considering all the issues raised and conditions that have not been met in the agreement.

Gibson favors the use of treated wastewater, (or effluent) as an alternative use on Sun City West golf courses as a reliable source, noting "If we're interested in saving ground water, there isn't a better way to do that than using effluent because that happens (is created) every day."

The water company presented a cost estimate of \$350,000 to deliver treated effluent to the golf courses, which Gibson questioned and Bob Jones said he thought was a highball estimate to discourage it use.

However, Whiting said he believes the cost would be even higher to make the line functional to deliver the effluent. "My guess is it will cost more than a million dollars," he said.

Hubbs disagreed with Gibson over the pipeline issue. Hubbs said she believes the Sun City taxpayers will lose the lawsuit, but said if they should prevail "there's nothing to stop Sun City West from going forward on its own." Presumably to share in costs, Hubbs said there are various developers down the path (from Lake Pleasant to Sun City West), and perhaps something could be worked out with the water company. She added "I still think CAP is a very viable solution, obviously the cheapest even though it costs \$15 million spread over all ratepayers."

Hubbs added that the legislature is considering changes in the law that could make it difficult to purchase water rights. She suggested if Sun City West is considering a purchase of water rights, it would be advisable to do so before any changes were enacted.

Also up for consideration is the option to bring CAP water in from the Beardsley Canal, which would require a shorter distance of pipeline to connect into Sun City West's existing distribution system. This could cost considerably more than the projected \$1 million effluent delivery costs, but less than the \$15 million price tag quoted in the original pipeline proposal.

The Beardsley Canal lies just a few miles off Sun City West's Northwest border, and extends Southwest down to Greenway in the Western Surprise area. It is currently being used to convey CAP water for irrigation to farmers in that area.

The water committee's efforts notwithstanding, Caldwell said the Recreation Centers' water sources have long been in jeopardy and time is running out for a resolution to the problem. He views the expiration in August 2005 of the General Industrial Use (GIU) permits, which allowed Sun City West the right to pump groundwater to irrigate four golf courses, to be the greatest issue the community faces.

According to Caldwell and Whiting, the time for discussion is over and action is needed. Whiting considers solving the water issue as a No. 1 priority. "We're running out of time," he said.

To that end, the Governing Board has hired a Phoenix attorney, Kathleen "Kathy" Ferris, to provide legal advice and help guide the committee and community through whatever process is needed to resolve its water needs. Ferris comes to the community with good credentials, having been the general legal counsel for the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

One issue the Board and its new attorney may want to review is the status of a water exchange agreement approved by a past Governing Board, which turned over Sun City West's grand fathered water rights to the Arizona American Water Company.

With the year winding down, and a solution to Sun City West's water problems appearing to be in sight, the first semester of "Water 101" comes to a conclusion. For the information of our returning winter residents, The Wester did a series of articles over the summer months that laid out the history of Sun City West's water issue from its beginning to present developments. A compilation of the series will be put together for distribution to interested residents, available on request at The Wester.

put more cars on the road there will be more incidents."

Whenever possible, the fire department takes alternate routes to avoid Grand Avenue, such as Thunderbird Road or cutting north on El Mirage Road or Dysart Road.

Use of emergency helicopters has also increased since the traffic surge, said Christmas.

"We definitely look at time of day while transporting patients," he said. "If there's a car accident on Grand, it would take them 20 minutes to transport them to the hospital in the morning, so we'd probably fly them."

Doug Nintzel, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Transportation, said that the

traffic issue between Loop 101 and Loop 303 on Grand Avenue is attributed to the rapidly growing population. More people, more cars.

"That area along Grand Avenue just may be the poster child for the impact of growth in the area," Nintzel said. "We face big challenges along that and there's a long list of them."

That list of challenges includes multiple intersections with several traffic signals, railroad tracks parallel to the roadway and, with people using it for everyday commutes, the highway acts more like a congested local street, he said.

The good news is that the Regional Transportation Plan, which was approved when voters passed Prop. 400, sets aside approximately \$100

million for improvements along Grand Avenue over the first half of the 20-year program that begins in 2006, said Nintzel.

"We're going to utilize some time before the funds are available to look ahead to conducting the necessary studies to determine what some of the improvements will be," he said.

Some of those improvements will likely be made in making the intersections more efficient, upgrading access control measures and resolving issues where there are too many exit and entry points where it gets clogged, Nintzel said.

One possible solution would be to install Intelligent Transportation Technology to improve synchronization of lights.

Nintzel said ADOT has struggled with synchronizing the traffic signals along Grand Avenue because there are so many intersections and traffic.

"To a certain extent, they are synchronized however, newer technology could probably help us in that area," he said. "It's going to be a combination of things to make an improvement. No one thing is going to solve the traffic problems along that stretch of Grand Avenue."

ADOT is looking ahead and working to design a concept study for Grand Avenue that will likely address the possibility of an overpass.

"\$100 million can be used up fairly quickly with overpasses at intersections," Nintzel said. "There are no solid solutions yet."

No simple answer to traffic woes

ANNIE KARSTENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Bumper-to-bumper traffic on Grand Avenue has become agonizing for rush-hour commuters, and though the passage of Proposition 400 includes \$100 million for improvements to the busy stretch of highway, officials say there's no simple solution to the problems.

"From Bell to the 101, it's just horrible," said Ron Thompson whose daily commute from Wittmann to Glendale takes one hour. "The area is growing and the infrastructure is racing to keep up, and with limited roads, this was bound to happen."

Thompson said he often waits through two or three traffic signal rotations before he gets through. Bridges, additional lanes and safer drivers would improve the situation, he said.

Dale Nemecek of Youngtown avoids Grand Avenue at all costs.

"Only if I feel brave will I fight Grand," said Nemecek, a Sun Health employee. "I've always been scared of Grand, but sometimes I'll do the dodge and weave."

Thompson and Nemecek agree that the intersection at 113th and Grand Avenue is dangerous and one of the main reasons for the traffic problems.

El Mirage police officer Al Mayhew patrols Grand Avenue and said accidents happen far too frequently within the traffic mess. Inattention of drivers, tailgating and driving either above or below the speed limit can cause the accidents, he said, adding that the traffic signals could use better synchronization.

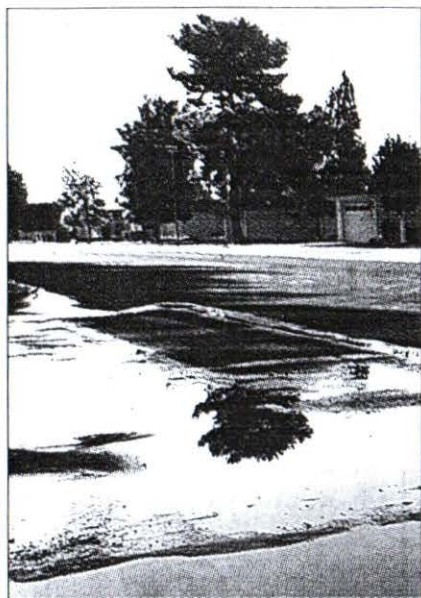
"There's nothing we can do," Mayhew said. "Hopefully our police presence makes people more aware of what they're doing, but that usually isn't the case."

Thomas Christmas, battalion chief for the El Mirage Fire Department, said emergency response times are slower because of the traffic.

"It takes longer to get to an emergency with the growth in the West Valley," Christmas said. "People use Grand to access the West Valley, unfortunately we have to deal with that. It's the sheer volume — you

See TRAFFIC, A5

Watchdogs guard against water loss



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN FILE PHOTO

In an effort to conserve water, the Sun City West water committees urge homeowners and businesses to stem irrigation water running into the streets.

Sun City West looks to Legislature for relief

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West water watchdogs hope to get help from the Legislature to ensure the community doesn't lose thousands of acre-feet of water next year.

The water committees of the Recreation Centers of Sun City West and the Property Owners and Residents Association have approached Mark Frank, director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, about extending the community's General Industrial Use permits through 2012.

According to some committee members who met in a joint session Tuesday, Frank is willing to do that

by including a provision in DWR's funding bill next legislative session.

The GIU permits, used to irrigate some of the community's golf courses with groundwater, are set to expire in August 2005. Legislation passed in 2002 would extend the permits until 2012, but only if the community can prove it is making headway in using Central Arizona Project water.

Use of CAP water could come through a pipeline to Sun City for use on its golf courses, and then tie into an existing pipeline in Sun City West to serve golf courses there as well, but that project is tied up in a court battle that won't go to trial until March. Unless Sun City West can find another method of using CAP water or can prove it is otherwise reducing its reliance on groundwater, the GIU permits will expire next year.

Bob Jones, chair of PORA's water committee, said the community has requested Frank include the extension in an omnibus funding bill

next session.

The problem is most legislators probably wouldn't support a special provision benefiting just Sun City West, according to some committee members.

"We are not popular down at the Legislature, nor is Sun City because we're viewed as not paying school taxes," said Rep. Carole Hubbs of Sun City West, R-District 4. "It's just an attitude and they're going to say they're specifically singling us out."

For that reason, Jones and Hubbs suggested the community not spread the word of its request, for fear legislators from other communities would balk at the idea.

Carolyn Jennings, who chairs RCSCW's committee, said making a request that would benefit a single community isn't unusual. "We're not the only special interest in that omnibus bill. There are others as well," she said. "But rather than draw attention to it, we'd rather just leave it quiet."

Hubbs said Sun City West will be "in very serious trouble" if the groundwater permits are not extended.

"What will they do if it doesn't pass and they lose 2,000 acre-feet of water?" she asked.

One acre-foot is 325,851 gallons, or about enough to supply a family of four for a year.

Jennings said there is no plan but the community likely would have to buy water allocations to make up for the loss.

Jones said Frank indicated the water resources department has "never shut down a well because of expiring permits."

However, he added, "That's no excuse to curtail our activities."

The water committees continue to pursue other alternatives to groundwater for the community, including the possibility of using treated effluent to irrigate the golf courses. Members also are looking at other

See SCW, A5

From A1

sources of water, such as buying water rights from Native American tribes, and obtaining new CAP allocations or additional effluent sources.

Hubbs said the state's water crisis is only going to get worse in the future.

"You think gas is bad —

percentage-wise, (water) is just going to be horrendous in the next 10 years," she said.

In an effort to conserve water, the committees continue to contact homeowners and businesses that allow irrigation water to run into the streets. The so-called fugitive water has been an ongoing challenge.

Harvey Lorentz, a member

of the committees, said the gutter in front of an average home can hold about 10 gallons of water. "So if you see water running down in front of 10 homes, that's 100 gallons," he said.

Bob McCurdy, another member of the committees, said posse members contact businesses and homeowners whenever they notice fugitive water. He said Luke Air Force

Base is a positive story in the water conservation battle. The base in 1995 started converting landscaping at its off-base housing to desert landscaping, saving about \$1 million a year in water and maintenance costs.

The committee will meet again 9 a.m. Oct. 26 in the Camino Room at PORA, 13815 Camino del Sol.

To pay for the audit, Surprise will use money within its facilities maintenance budget. Officials hope the audit will provide a detailed list of non-compliant items within the city as well as the cost to bring them into compliance.

In theory, many of the city's newest amenities would be ADA compliant. The law requires any public structure built after 1991 be designed

involved and be able to address access problems for the disabled, said Jim Olmsted, one of the commission's members.

"It would bring everyone up to the same page so that when we do come in, we can move forward quickly," he said.

While the audit has a cost, Olmsted said the commission can arrange through the state office the promotes the ADA to have the training done for free.

WATER 101

By Marianne Sikler

By Marianne Sikler

On Arsenic: What causes it, how does it affect people, and why is it being removed from Sun City West's water supply?

Concerning its origin, arsenic is a naturally occurring element in rocks, soils, and water, widely distributed throughout the earth's crust and present in trace amounts in all living organisms. Poisonous if taken in large quantities over a period of time, the human body has the capability to slough off the effects of lower levels of arsenic if ingested, much as it does the effects of chlorine in the water supply.

Arsenic contamination can occur as the result of leaching from old waste dumps, copper mines, or tailings, coal mining, past use of arsenic-containing pesticides, and industrial pollution. The federal government has taken measures to have industries clean up such pollution problems.

From a report done by the U. S. Geological Survey, findings made through the analyses of 18,850 wells in 595 counties across the U. S. over a period of 20 years shows arsenic concentration in groundwater to be highest in the West. Lesser concentrations appear in the Midwest and Northeast, with the least concentrations in the Southeast. These findings show arsenic levels across the country generally average 50 ppb (parts per billion) or less, meeting national standards set in 1975.

From data compiled in a 1999 study on drinking water in 25 states by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) confirming the prevalence of arsenic at the 50 ppb level, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) concluded an estimated 56 million Americans are drinking tap water supplied by systems which they consider pose unacceptable cancer risks. The NRDC and other activist

groups have been pressuring the EPA to lower the arsenic standards for drinking water to 5 ppb or less.

The NRDC is a national, non-profit, political action group with offices in New York, Washington, D. C., and San Francisco. It lobbies federal agencies and legislators over a host of environmental issues, as well as geo-political issues concerning global warming and nuclear weapons. Its long list of environmental-oriented trustees include such celebrity-activists as Hollywood actors Robert Redford and Leonardo De Caprio who act as spokesmen for the organization.

At the urging of environmentalist groups, then President Clinton proposed in early 2001 that the EPA lower the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for arsenic in drinking water from 50 parts per billion to 10 ppb. The basis for establishing the new standard was to bring the U. S. into compliance with a 10 ppb standard that had been set in Europe, and worldwide. In complying with the edict, the EPA officially announced in November 2001 that new U. S. standards of 10 ppb had been established.

Instrumental in lobbying for the new standards were The National Academies (a private, Washington, D. C. based advisory group to the nation on science, engineering and medicine), the NDRC, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

WHO had been doing extensive water studies over a 20 year period in Taiwan, China, Chile, Argentina, India and Bangladesh, with the United States directing millions in aid dollars and grant money towards its efforts. Serious health problems associated with extremely high levels of arsenic in the drinking water of these countries helped influence the EPA in making its decision to require American water companies to operate under the new restrictive standard. WHO has joined with the EPA and the NDRC in declaring arsenic to be

See **WATER 101**, Page 2

WATER 101, from Page 1

a carcinogen.

The EPA decision to adopt the new standards was not without controversy and debate.

Based on the foreign long range studies, environmentalist groups argued people who daily consume water containing 10 ppb over their lifetime have a 3 in 1,000 risk of contracting lung, bladder or skin cancer. They want MCL arsenic levels in water lowered to 5 ppb, or better yet to zero.

Conservative groups argued that since the foreign studies were basically conducted in small villages of undeveloped countries, from among a populace with poor diets and malnutrition, they should not be compared to conditions in highly developed countries like the U. S. which has stringent laws and treatment standards to protect the nation's water supplies. The EPA was accused of orchestrating health fears that have no basis in fact.

Water Associations throughout the country had cost concerns. They wanted it determined at what level it could be best to reduce health risks at a cost that is justified, particularly for small water systems. Over 90% of the 54,000 water companies in the U. S. that would be affected by the new standards are small systems serving less than 10,000 people. Homeowners with private wells are not regulated.

A deadline of January, 2006, has been established for compliance. Congress extended the deadline out to nine years for smaller companies, and is making federal loans available to help them more easily comply with the new standards.

There have been no long-range U. S. studies to verify a claim the country is experiencing certain types of cancer linked to arsenic in its water supply, which critics have been quick to point out.

However, there are statistics from The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that show 200,000 to 1,300,000 Americans become acutely ill each year, and several hundred die in this country from microbiologically contaminated water, or waterborne infectious diseases.

over

In conclusion: The arsenic content of Sun City West water is 5-25 ppb. The Arizona American Water Company expects to complete plant improvements in Sun City West by January 23, 2006—a federal deadline for establishing the new 10 ppb arsenic standards for drinking water.

Has the drinking water supply in Sun City West been safe to drink under present arsenic-content standards? Yes.

Would it be considered just as safe, or ultra-safe to drink under the newly imposed standards? Yes.

*Next Water 101 column:
Bottled Water—How safe is it?*

THE WESTER Thursday, September 16, 2004

Anatomy of the SCW water issue

The Wester is receiving calls and letters requesting a series of articles to better explain and inform residents on the water issue. As one person so colorfully described the need, "There's some 'splainin' to do" to the residents, and they prefer it to be done in terms that can be easily understood.

In view of the increased interest, The Wester, as a public service, has initiated a column devoted to the water issue.

"Water 101" is an ongoing informational column. Its purpose is to report on any and all water activities and events that arise and affect the community.

Future columns will include, but not be limited to, the activities of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Arizona Corporation Commission, Sun City and Sun City West Recreation Centers, Sun City Taxpayers Association, Central Arizona Project (CAP), and the Arizona-American Water Company.

What role do each of these involved entities play in any action or controversy surrounding the water issue?

Answering Public Inquires

The Wester has received several inquiries regarding the water issue, and that's a good sign. The public is questioning how the water issue is being resolved, and has the right to know that. No questions should be considered trivial.

One such inquiry came in the form of a letter to the editor. It referred to a recommendation made in 1992 by the Sun City West water committee in support of bringing CAP (Central Arizona Project) water down from Lake Pleasant for use on all golf courses in the West Valley.

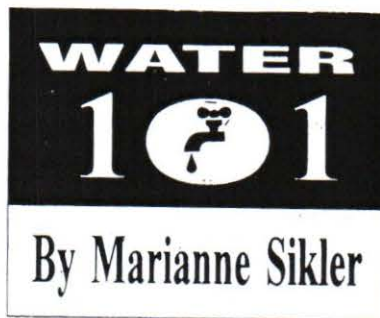
Another version of that recommendation was introduced in 1998 during a CAP water task force assembled by the water company.

The proceedings resulted in the approval of a pipeline to deliver untreated CAP water to the Sun Cities for use on golf courses, with pipeline construction costs paid by ratepayers of Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown through monthly water bills.

Del Webb did try to deliver effluent to Sun City West golf courses, but discontinued its use. Sprinkler clogging may have been a symptom, but not the main cause of the problem. A high concentration of nitrates (a salt of nitric acid) in the water was the root cause.

To resolve the nitrate problem, an amendment to the September 1998 effluent agreement called for Del Webb to construct Denitrification Facilities.

The amendment describes in detail the negotiations between Del Webb and the water company over the construction, cost, and modifications to the Denitrification Facilities being put in place.



In cities like Scottsdale and Peoria, golf courses using CAP water are receiving supplemental deliveries of treated wastewater (or effluent) of a quality 95% that of pure water to help dilute its high salinity. Sun City West does not have the availability of unlimited amounts of effluent, and would have to rely on groundwater pumping for that purpose.

The clogging of sprinklers is a maintenance problem, which according to SCW Environmental Services Manager Todd Patty is not uncommon.

All Sun City West golf courses water distribution systems are connected with each other, as well as with the private Briarwood and Hillcrest golf courses, and Corte Bella at the end of Williams Drive.

According to Patty, Sun City West has established a five-year program to convert all sprinkler heads to a valve and head system, which allows one valve to control five sprinkler heads. It allows for better maintenance and management of the system, and saves on water consumption.

In 1999, all golf courses in Sun City West were pumping 4,025 acre feet of groundwater. Today they pump 3,652 acre feet.

Water 101 tries to keep its in-
See **SCW WATER ISSUES**,
Page 2

formation as simple and understandable as possible, but does at times insert technical phrasing.

A request was received from a resident who asked for a simple interpretation of terms such as effluent, credits, replacement source, denitrification process, grandfathered water rights, etc. To accommodate that request, a glossary has been included with this article.

Still another resident questioned Del Webb's intentions in the initial planning of the community, namely to build more golf courses than it had acquired water rights for, and building courses using temporary permits.

Webb scaled back golf course construction in Sun City Grand to four courses.

Nevertheless, Jeff Kanig, head of its member Governing Board criticized the building of Grand's fourth golf course, which he said

placed that community in a deficit budget situation of over \$800,000.

Glossary of terms:

Effluent (wastewater): The outflow of a sewer; all means of "used" water that flows through a sewage system, including human waste.

Treated effluent: The process of neutralizing or removing harmful components through a series of treatment stages. It deals with breaking down harmful salts and inorganic matter in wastewater through the end use of Sodium Hypochlorite (a super bleach and disinfectant).

Effluent credits: Same principle as a line of credit. Pumping groundwater, but limiting it not to exceed a designated allocation or amount. (Example: 1 effluent credit per each acre foot of groundwater.) Sun City West generates just over 3,000 acre

THE WESTER Thursday, September 2, 2004

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Effluent as an alternative resource:

Prologue: Sun City West doesn't lack water to meet its needs. What it does lack is sufficient water rights to meet all its golf course irrigation needs. On August 5, 2005, temporary permits used to irrigate the Echo Mesa, Stardust, Trail Ridge and Grandview courses will expire. Sun City West must decide how best to replace the expiring permits for continued irrigation of the four courses.

Through an effluent agreement during negotiations over acquisition by the water company of Del Webb's wastewater treatment facilities, Sun City West now receives 1,000 acre feet of free effluent credits against groundwater pumping on its Deer Valley and Desert Trails golf courses.

The agreement also allows Sun City West the option to purchase 2,000 acre feet of treated effluent that could be used as a replacement source for the expiring permits.



The same method of effluent credits could be applied against the four other courses.

The result would be Sun City West could continue pumping groundwater as it has historically done on the four courses, charging it as credits against the effluent. The purchase price would be \$150/acre foot, or \$300,000.

In this alternative, the treated but undelivered effluent is deposited into the aquifer at the same time it is being credited against to account for groundwater pumping.

Another option would be to physically deliver treated effluent to the four courses. The infrastructure is in place, since it has been delivered before in that manner by Del Webb.

Its use was discontinued due to a problem with nitrates damaging the grass, a problem that was subsequently remedied through a denitrification process. Recently the water company has further refined the effluent treatment process, which should alleviate concerns that its use would be detrimental to the courses.

There's been a question of an Arizona-American Water Company cost estimate of \$355,000 to bring the effluent in from a Beardsley connection to the Stardust course. However, a possible connection between the Deer Valley golf course into the existing pipeline distribution system is being explored.

These and other options would not require Sun City West to relinquish its existing grandfathered water rights. No Arizona statute mandates that water rights have to be given up in order to receive CAP water resources.

Next in the Water 101 series: Other options.

August 18, 2004

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

Water conservation pushed in Sun Cities

State, cities still in drought alert

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

Del Miksis is doing her part to save water in a desert environment.

The executive assistant of the Property Owners and Residents Association of Sun City West had a hot water re-circulation pump installed in her home.

"It's a big help in the water department naturally," she said. "You are saving lots of water."

Instead of water running down the drain, the pump recirculates the water back to the water heater until it is hot for the shower. The pump can save a household of two between 8,000 to 10,000 gallons of water each year.

Conservation measures are especially important now as Arizona enters its 10th year of drought.

The program Water — Use it Wisely announced it just estab-

lished a water guide for residents to help them determine if they are watering too much or too little and how to get their numbers right by accessing, www.wateruseitwisely.com.

The "Landscape Watering by the Numbers" guide calculates the appropriate amount of water to be used for watering schedules. Fifty percent of a household's water use goes into watering landscapes, officials said.

"There's not enough water

out there to waste," said Donna DiFrancesco, water conservation specialist for the city of Mesa. "We always should be using water as efficiently as we can and keep in mind conservation with the drought occurring. With conservation it's more of a kind of lifestyle change and not really any kind of sacrifice."

The Water — Use It Wisely program established in 2000 as a statewide effort to promote water conservation and education and partners with entities such as Mesa, Phoenix, Glendale, Surprise and Luke Air Force Base.

Whether it is changing out shower heads or switching to low-flow toilets, it all goes a long way to help save water. For instance, toilets installed before the 1980s used five gallons to flush compared with today's toilets that use 1.6 gallons.

"Conservation is more important than ever because of the drought," Ms. DiFrancesco said.

Some experts predict Arizona may be in a 20- to 30-year drought period.

So far, PORA has sold more

See **Water** — Page 9

Water

Continued From Page 1

than 1,000 hot water re-circulation pumps to Sun City West homeowners since April.

Sun City Homeowners Association sold fewer than 150 of the mechanisms to its residents.

"We have not gotten nearly the amount of requests that PORA does although we are twice as big," said HOA Executive Director lone Boynton.

She said the sales are low likely because HOA began offering the pumps in May when snowbirds typically leave the area for cooler climates. She expected the sales to pick up in the fall. And she said,

HOA may pick up its efforts to increase water conservation awareness among residents.

"When my dad, who died eight years ago, lived here in the mid-1970s, he always felt it was such a shame to waste all that water running down the drain while waiting for the shower to get hot enough," Ms. Boynton recalled. "So he would go to the bathroom armed with

a bucket and catch the water as it heated up and water his rose buses. He would get three buckets of water."

Post your comments on this issue at newsblog.info/0302

News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com

Tips to save water

- Check evaporative cooler annually.
- Run washing machine and dishwasher only when full and save up to 1,000 gallons a month.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Compost instead and save gallons every time.
- Minimize evaporation by watering during the early morning hours, when temperatures are cooler and winds are lighter.
- Replace shower head with a water-efficient one if current shower can fill a one-gallon bucket in less than 20 seconds.
- Time shower under five minutes and save up to 1,000 gallons a month.
- If toilet was installed before 1980, place a toilet dam or bottle filled with water in the toilet tank to cut down on the amount of water used for each flush. Be sure these devices do not interfere with operating parts.
- Keep a bucket in the shower to catch water as it warms up or runs. Use this water to flush toilets or water plants.

For more tips log onto www.wateruseitwisely.com

Thursday, August 12, 2004 THE WESTER



Despite its high quality, treated effluent can't be used for potable residential delivery, but its excess can be directed as replenishment into the aquifer.

Treated effluent returned to the aquifer can also be used as credits against groundwater pumping — a method used by Sun City West to account for pumping up to 1,000 acre feet of groundwater on the Deer Valley and Desert Trails golf courses.

Corte Bella credits its groundwater usage against purchased or leased water rights provided through the Arizona American Water Company. Corte Bella's golf course uses 600 acre feet/year of groundwater. An innovative conservation measure on its golf course includes a small recycling process to drain irrigation water from the course into a grate and below-ground 20-foot piping system that delivers it to a 16 to 18 ft. deep delivery lake for reuse.

CAP water is being delivered into some communities for residential use. An example of this is Anthem, where a 20-mile pipeline to Lake Pleasant was put in place by developer Del Webb to deliver, and treat CAP water for potable residential use.

This source is the most expensive option since it requires a costly delivery and treatment system. Anthem residents have been plagued with treatment problems, a situation they brought before the Arizona Corporation Commission during recent water company rate increase hearings.

The new developments of Coldwater Ranch, Dos Rios, Ranch Cabrillo, Cross River, Rio Sierra, Rancho Silverado and Sundero developments to the North of Sun City West will bring in an estimated 6,503 residential units to the area. None have announced how they plan to supply water to meet their needs.

It appears for the time being the drought is not at a stage where it affects growth efforts.

However, the Governor's Drought Task Force regards its efforts as flexible, taking into account its drought-watch activities need ongoing review and update to keep a formal drought plan current and avert a future crisis.

Committee members will be working with the National Drought Mitigation Center to develop an extensive plan, and will seek help from other states that have established successful plans.

Sun City West moves with flow

Tired of waiting, SCW explores CAP options

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West isn't waiting any longer for Sun City to figure out its water problem.

The Sun City West Water Committee will explore plans to bring Central Arizona Project water to the community's golf courses directly through the Beardsley Canal, and to irrigate some of the courses with treated effluent.

The community's water future is otherwise tied to the outcome of a lawsuit filed over the planned construction of a pipeline to bring CAP water to Sun City and tie in with Sun City West's system through the canal.

"We can't wait for this suit to be settled because it could go on for quite a

while," said committee chairwoman Carolyn Jennings. "We have to go it alone."

Originally filed by Sun City Taxpayers Association members but now pursued by Sun City residents against the Recreation Centers of Sun City, the lawsuit alleges RCSC didn't have authority to vote on the pipeline's construction and that the decision should have been left up to members. The trial is scheduled for March 5.

If the pipeline is built, it would serve to meet the requirements of legislation passed in 2002 that extends Sun City West's General Industrial Use, or GIU, permits until 2012.

Without some other proof that Sun City West was attempting to use CAP water, the permits, which the centers use to irrigate the golf courses with groundwater, expire in August 2005. But committee members are unsure what would constitute proof other than

See WATER, A5

From A1

the pipeline.

"I think we need to have some actual things happen more than just a bunch of paperwork to convince (the Arizona Department of Water Resources)," said committee member Tom Cook.

The legislation states the permit extension "shall be terminated earlier if progress toward completion of a pipeline to transport the CAP water to golf courses has not occurred."

In case the Sun City lawsuit is delayed or RCSC loses and the pipeline isn't built, the Sun City West Water Committee is pursuing the Beardsley Canal and effluent options.

Jennings said the ad-hoc committee, formed to look into extending the GIU permits and make effluent available for the courses, has

started meeting. Jennings said the ad-hoc committee also is investigating other possible water sources such as Indian water, Maricopa Water District water, additional CAP allocations, private CAP owners' allotments and other effluent sources.

"We are looking at all those different ways to get off the pump," she said.

Committee member Bob Jones said discussions already are under way to start using treated effluent to irrigate the community's golf courses. Attempts in the past have failed because the effluent was treated through a primary treatment plant, which left high levels of nitrates and total dissolved solids in the water.

"It got so bad there were snails growing in the pipe," he said. "That was stopped immediately and it was never tried again."

Under the new plan, the

effluent goes through a tertiary treatment that significantly lowers the nitrates and solids.

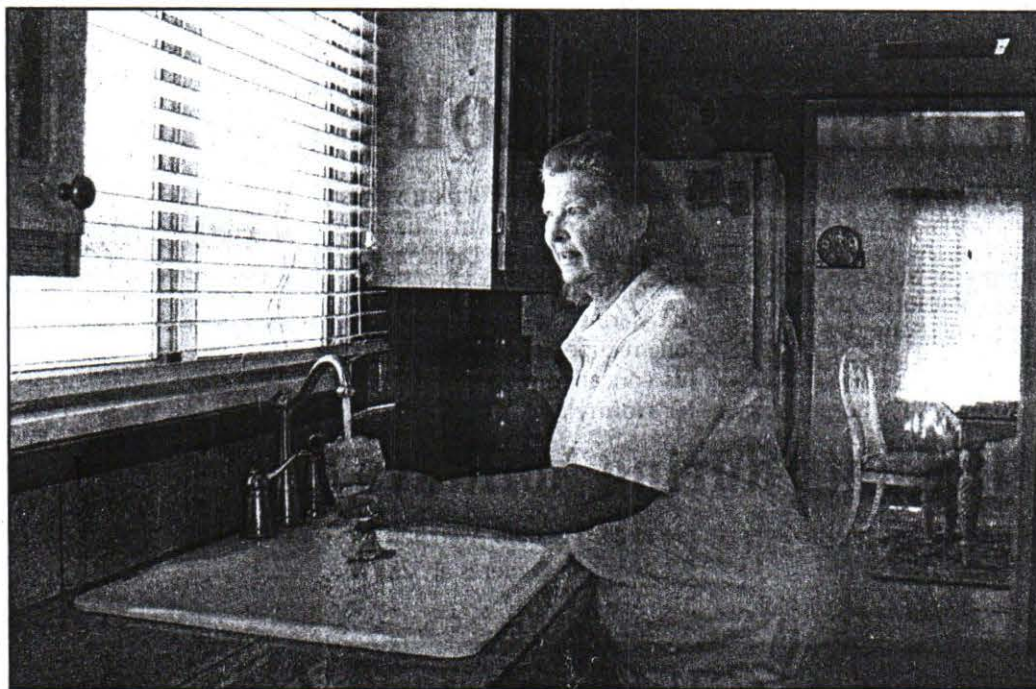
Jennings said the Beardsley Canal was built to serve agricultural needs in the West Valley, and at the time, there was no space in the channel for Sun City West to carry its CAP water.

Now that much of the agriculture has given way to residential development, which typically uses less water, "there's a possibility we can put some or all of our CAP allotment into the Beardsley Canal."

Jones said Sun City and Sun City West are the only Valley communities that totally rely on groundwater. The Beardsley option is one way to reduce that reliance.

"We have already started negotiations with Arizona-American," which supplies the community's water, he said.

Finance: Water, sewer rates to rise



Independent Newspapers/Cecilia Chan

Sun City resident Barbara Van Degrift said the approved hike in her monthly water bills is still cheaper than what she paid for water in Pennsylvania.

SC, SCW and Youngtown last changed in 1997

By Cecilia Chan
Independent Newspapers

Sun Cities and Youngtown residents for the most part will see a slight increase in their water and sewer bills come July 1.

The five-member Arizona Corporation Commission unanimously approved a combination of rate increases and decreases for 10 Arizona-American Water Co. systems.

"It's difficult to approve increases that affect your own neighborhood," Commissioner and Sun City West resident Mike Gleason said in a news release. "I hope my neighbors will view this decision in its proper context and know that we carefully evaluated every cost before reaching a decision to increase rates. We approved less than half of the rate increase that the company sought for the Sun City West systems."

Sun City and Youngtown residents on average will see their monthly water bill increase by \$2.84 but see their wastewater bill drop by an average of \$1.89. In Sun City West,

APPROVED INCREASES AND DECREASES IN WATER AND SEWER BILLS

Sun City West water

Current average bill: \$11.67

Approved increase: \$1.67

Original proposed increase: \$5.17

New bill: \$13.34

Customers served: 15,300

Sun City West wastewater

Current average bill: \$16.24

Approved increase: \$4.32

Original proposed increase: \$9.03

New bill: \$20.56

Customers served: 14,900

Sun City/Youngtown water

Current average bill: \$11.17

Approved increase: \$2.84

Original proposed increase: \$9.92

New bill: \$14.04

Customers served: 22,000

Sun City/Youngtown wastewater

Current average bill: \$12.87

Approved decrease: -\$1.89

Original proposed increase: \$1.61

New bill: \$10.98

Customers served: 21,200

(Information from Arizona Corporation Commission)

OVER

Sewer

Continued From Page 1

the water bill will go up by \$1.67 a month and the wastewater bill also will go up by \$4.32.

"I think it's cheap as it is," said three-year Sun City resident Barbara Van Degrift. "So what are you going to do. You are in the desert. You got to pay for the water."

Nearby neighbor Jean Christ-ian agreed.

"Everything else is going up," she said. "Water has got to go up, too."

After months of deliberation, testimony and public comment, the commissioners June 18 approved the new rates based on what it cost the water company to install, maintain and operate each of the separate water and waste-water systems.

"I think most everybody felt (Arizona-American) deserved some sort of increase but not what they asked for," said Bob Jones, a member of the Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association Board of Directors.

Mr. Jones chairs PORA's water committee and drafted the board's letter opposing Arizona-American's original request to

raise Sun City West residents' water bills by an average of \$5.17 and their sewer bills by \$9.03.

"We are right in line with the rest of the Valley, if not cheaper," Mr. Jones said of the new rates.

Youngtown spent \$130,000 for experts and an attorney fees to argue before the commissioners that the water company was asking for too much of an increase.

Town Manager Mark Fooks said Arizona-American filed for the rate increase because it needed to recoup its investment in acquiring Citizens Water Resources in 2002.

"They paid many, many millions more than what the utility was worth on the market," Mr. Fooks said. "And we believe much of that was put in the rate case to pay themselves back and we basically won that argument. They got a 25.04 percent increase instead of the 84 percent they wanted."

Mr. Fooks said Youngtown does not begrudge Arizona-American seeking adequate funds to operate as long as the increase is fair and just.

"We are disappointed," said Kevin Tilden, company spokesman. "The original application we submitted was in the best interest of our customers. What they did, we think, does not allow for an appropriate amount

of investment...to upgrade the infrastructure and water system... and doesn't attract capital to the state."

He also said the company filed for a rate hike strictly to cover the increase cost to maintain, operate and test its water system to provide safe, reliable drinking water. He also said the company's request seemed high only because the last rate increase for the three communities was in 1997.

Company officials are expected to meet "to determine the difference between what was requested and what was granted and how this will impact customers and operations," Mr. Tilden said.

He also said the company has no plans at the moment to seek another rate increase in the near future, however, typically utility companies would request rate increases every few years to avoid a "rate shock."

Commissioners also approved a motion requiring Arizona-American to form a task force of various consumers and stakeholder groups to study if Youngtown and Sun City have sufficient water, water lines and hydrants to fight fires.

The task force must be formed by November and findings and

proposals must be completed for the commission by May 31, 2005, said Heather Murphy, Arizona Corporation Commission spokeswoman.

The commissioners also approved several other amendments:

- Arizona-American will notify customers of water conservation strategies that they can use to lower their bills and lower the amount of water they are using in the current drought.

- Arizona-American and fire departments in Sun City and Youngtown must test hydrants periodically and submit annual reports to the commission.

- Arizona-American needs to examine if tiered wastewater rates based on water consumption might be more appropriate for its systems. Some systems use a flat monthly rate for sewer use based on a percentage of water consumption because there is no way to meter sewage outflow.

Any changes to the calculation methodology would take place through a future rate case.

*Post your comments on this issue at newsblog.info/0302
News editor Cecilia Chan can be reached at 972-6101 or cchan@newszap.com*

Thursday, June 24, 2004 THE WESTER

Water issue concerns rising

Governing Board sharpens focus

By Marianne Sikler

The water issue is on the minds of many Sun City West residents these days, a topic that now seems to generate questions at every Board meeting.

Responding to a water committee report given at last week's Governing Board meeting by Carolyn Jennings who chairs the committee, resident Don Schneider was looking for answers concerning the water issue.

Schneider wanted to clarify if the Recreation Centers Board has taken the official position that the CAP program being presented is recognized as being the "only" program for solving the community's water situation.

Jennings replied that past governing boards signed with the state years ago to support a groundwater saving project to either receive CAP water or effluent as a replacement water source.

A proposed plan to bring Central Arizona Project (CAP) water into Sun City West included construction of a pipeline for direct delivery. The pipeline would be built and owned by the Arizona American Water Company and paid for by the ratepayers of Sun City, Sun City West, and Youngtown.

Schneider said he had been following the issue for years through subscriptions to local papers before even moving to Sun City West. He recalled the CAP pipeline project was estimated to cost \$15-18 million through a bond issue, and would result in increased water rates.

Schneider referred to the effluent processing plant developed and built by Webb, that the developer offered to turn over to Sun City West in 1995.

He contends had it been kept, Sun City West would have been processing its own effluent and not paying charges to Arizona

American for recapturing it.

"I can't imagine giving away a facility that was developed and given to us by the builder, to buy (back) our own water," he said.

Jennings said she heard of the processing plant for effluent that was developed and built by Del Webb was turned over to residents in 1995, and that structure was given to then Citizens (Water Company).

She explained it was her understanding the Recreation Centers was in no position to take over and run the plant, and would have had to hire someone to do that.

Jennings said she knew of an agreement signed that all Sun City West effluent goes to that plant, but hadn't read all the details.

"At this time it can't be changed, it's history," she added.

Although Jennings said four Sun City West courses are now being watered by pumping under State General Industrial Use permits, she contends no golf courses in the state will be allowed to use GIU permits for watering.

"I believe this Board and all future Boards will have to support the groundwater savings project and bring in the water or close down golf courses, it's one or the other," she said.

Schneider concluded his remarks by urging the Board to give careful consideration to the issue.

"We're now finding out the piping is more expensive than was anticipated for our facilities. I hope that we really study this CAP water project because of the total cost involved to this community," he added.

Board Dir. Barbara DuPont said she continually receives requests from residents for more

information on the water issue. She requested the water committee consider having regular seminar type meetings in the social hall every month, to discuss various aspects of the issue one at a time for a better understanding of it by residents.

The Recreation Centers Board recognizes there is confusion over resolving the water problem, which may be due to the overlapping efforts and goals of the PORA water committee and the responsibilities and priorities of a Governing Board water committee.

Ray Caldwell, president of the Sun City West Recreation Board, is suggesting a split in the activities of both committees, for each association to better define priorities and direct efforts toward meeting its stated goals.

The focus of a PORA water group is with water conservation, and residential and ratepayer concerns.

The main concern of the Recreation Centers' Board regarding water issues is to assure an adequate supply of water resources for association facilities, landscaping and golf course irrigation—a concern it shares jointly with the general manager.

The meeting ended with a request by resident Bob Oserin that the Governing Board draft a resolution encouraging all residents to consider the use of recirculating hot water systems in homes to conserve water.

Oserin said 800 Sun City West, and 140 Sun City residents have taken advantage of PORA's retrofitting program. He would like to see the program expanded to include other senior communities through the added encouragement and support of the Sun City West Recreation Board.

From A1

DAILY NEWS-SUN

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2004

Water crisis raises urgency for pipeline to Sun City West

Lawsuit puts community at risk of losing pumping rights

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West leaders are toying with the idea of building a pipeline to bring Central Arizona Project water to the community.

In a video presentation unveiled Tuesday, the Sun City West Water Committee tackled the water crisis facing the community, which relies solely on groundwater for

residents' use and for irrigating the golf courses despite the availability of 2,372 acre-feet of CAP water.

One acre-foot is 325,851 gallons, or about enough to supply a family of four for a year.

"We are being criticized by surrounding communities because we are the biggest users of groundwater in the Northwest Valley not using our CAP water allocation," the committee states in the presentation.

Sun City West uses its CAP allocation, but only for recharge, meaning it is placed in fields to be absorbed back into the aquifer for future pumping.

See SCW, A3

By the time Sun City West's Deer Valley and Desert Trails golf courses were built, the Arizona Department of Water Resources was requiring new golf courses to use effluent for irrigation, according to the committee's presentation. Del Webb Corp., now owned by Pulte Homes, decided at the time to recharge effluent, gaining credits to water the courses with groundwater.

The department of water resources has developed a Groundwater Savings Plan for the Sun Cities that would have a CAP canal built to bring Colorado River water to Sun City and tie in with an already existing pipeline in Sun City West to irrigate the golf courses.

The pipeline issue, however, is complicated by a lawsuit filed by a group of Sun City residents against the Recreation Centers of Sun City demanding that residents be allowed to vote on whether to build the pipeline.

Sun City West also stands to lose its general industrial use, or GIU, permits to pump groundwater if the pipeline lawsuit is not resolved. Legislation sponsored in 2002 by former Rep. Mike Gleason extended the permits for seven years after the date they were set to expire, provided construction of the pipeline had "substantially commenced" by August 2007. The permits would otherwise expire in August 2005.

The committee's presentation states that if the lawsuit

isn't resolved in the near future, one option to meet Sun City West's water needs is to revise the Groundwater Savings Plan and build its own pipeline to deliver CAP water to the golf courses.

The lawsuit is scheduled to go to court in March 2005.

Water Committee Co-chairman Carolyn Jennings said she wants to show the video presentation to the Recreation Centers of Sun City West board, of which she is also a member, and its management, before showing it to Sun City West's Golf Council on June 10.

"Then I don't think we will do much until the fall," she said.

Once winter visitors return, Jennings said, the presentation can be shown to residents as an educational tool to alert them to the water crisis.

Jennings said she's also looking into transforming the presentation into a computer format so people can view it through the Internet.

The presentation states that groundwater levels have already dropped 250 to 300 feet and are now at a depth of 400 to 500 feet, resulting in poorer water quality and increased pumping costs, as well as subsidence, which is when the ground sinks as water below it is pumped out.

Subsidence can cause cracks in foundations, sewer pipes, roads and other infrastructure.

According to the committee's presentation, the water levels could drop to 600 feet within the next 30 years. Bob Jones, the committee's other

co-chairman, said there's no evidence water is available at 600 feet.

"We don't even know it's that thick. We don't know if event exists to that extent," he said.

Committee member Larry Watts said he suspects the dropping levels are one of the reasons Sun City West's water has higher concentrations of arsenic than surrounding communities such as Sun City. Sun City West's arsenic levels average 18 to 22 parts per billion. The current federal standard is 50 parts per billion, but that is being reduced to 10 parts per billion by Jan. 23, 2006. Like other water companies in the state, the local provider, Arizona-American, is updating its system to ensure it meets the new requirements.

According to the presentation, the Arizona Department of Water Resources has identified the Sun Cities as one of three Critical Groundwater Management Areas in the state. Jennings said there's also a possibility that a groundwater pumping tax could be instituted, which would raise residents' water bills.

All of that means something must be done to address the problem, so the committee has been working to educate residents on the issue. Jennings said a movie that also discusses the West Valley's water problems will be shown along with the video presentation at various meetings in the fall.

Katy O'Grady may be reached at 876-2514 or kogrady@aztrib.com.

Forum wrestles with water woes

By **Geno Lawrenzi**

Independent Newspapers

What costs more per ounce than oil despite its apparent abundance all over the world?

If your answer was water, congratulations. Some 200 Sun Citians attended a forum on the vital subject at Community Church of Joy in Glendale. The League of Women Voters of Northwest Maricopa County was one of 44 sponsors.

Referring to water as one of the most important topics to Sun Citians, West Valley resident Richard Lanning, who attended the meeting, said he worries about area residents having enough water to meet all their needs at the right cost.

Among topics covered at the three-hour forum: drought, groundwater, pumping, environmental impact of water depletion and how the growing West Valley population will affect the present and future water supply.

Sun City West resident Carolyn Jennings, a community leader and member of the Recreation Centers of Sun City West Board of directors, is a native of Chicago - where water wasn't a scarce commodity.

"Back home, water was never an issue, but here it is a major issue," said Ms. Jennings. "We need to educate ourselves on its value as a resource and on the costs of having it in sufficient quantity."

See Water — Page 3

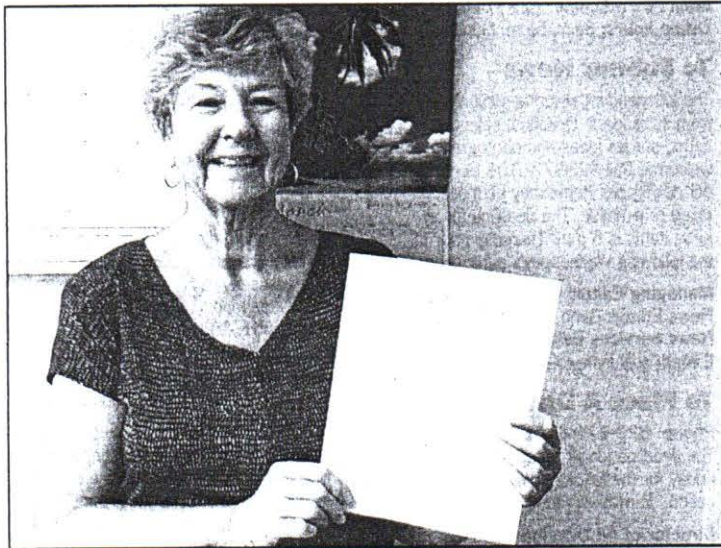


Photo by Geno Lawrenzi/Independent Newspapers

Donna Ahrens Lewis, chief executive of the Lake Pleasant Regional Association of Realtors, shows the application form her organization is distributing to low income Sun Cities homeowners in order to help them improve their homes.

Continued From Page 1
ties."

As a community leader in Sun City West, Ms. Jennings knows the difference between potable water, which is not drinkable but can be used for irrigation and other purposes, and pure water that can be used for cooking and drinking purposes.

Arizona saw around eight inches of rainwater last year.

"This means we must bring our water in from somewhere else," she said. "That's why these forums are so important in bringing in experts to keep us informed. There isn't a shortage of water right now, but we need foresight and leadership. We can't wait for a crisis to arrive before we act."

She and Bob Jones are co-chairmen of the water committee for the Recreation centers of Sun City West.

Arizona water officials are worried about the West Valley's ability to meet its water needs within three years without either restricting the growth rate or rationing the water supply.

Speakers included Robert Glennon, professor of law at the University of Arizona and author of "Water Follies — Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Water;" Kathy Jacobs, associate professor, University of Arizona; David Wilson, general manager, Central Arizona Project; Keith Larson, Arizona American Water Co.,

director of water resources. League officials said the turnout was disappointing. "We had hoped 500 or more would have attended, but only 200 or so showed up," said League member Lois Brechner.

Central Arizona Project is working on a Groundwater Savings Plan that will help the state meet its water needs for the next century.

For more information on the league and its activities, call (602) 604-9148.

Water worries

Pressure concerns ignite fears of major fire

MITCHELL VANTREASE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Some Northwest Valley communities are battling a lack of water pressure in hydrants that some officials believe could cause problems should a fire occur in the affected areas.

Firefighters and community officials in Sun City West and Youngtown are working with Arizona-American Water Co. to find solutions.

Sun City West Fire Marshal Jim Heger said low pressure exists at fire hydrants near houses on 151st Avenue, north of Deer Valley Road. Heger said he is hopeful the problem will be solved before a major fire occurs in the area.

"It needs to be remedied as soon as possible," Heger said. "We're just going to work with (Arizona-American Water Co.) until it's fixed."

Ray Jones, president of Arizona-American, said company officials are working with the community on the problem. Sun City West officials have said Arizona-American plans to install a booster pump in early 2004 to solve the pressure problem.

Sun City hasn't had glitches with any of its hydrants or pipes since the 1960s, said Fire Chief Jim Sebert. All of the pipes have been replaced since then.

"We have one of the largest and best water systems in the state of Arizona," he said.

However, Sebert said he and his staff knows of areas that need improvement, including Youngtown, which



STEVE CHERNEK

Youngtown Town Manager Mark Fooks, left, and Public Works Director Jesse Mendez, right, next to a 4-inch standpipe in an older section of Youngtown.

See **WATER, A5**

From A1

is in their jurisdiction.

Youngtown Town Manager Mark Fooks said parts of the community need new pipes to allow enough flow for fire trucks to pump enough water from hydrants. Half of the town has 4-inch pipes, but 6-inch pipes are the standard now.

"There are some weaker areas," said Sebert. "It's vastly improved. But we want to be able to do our best jobs with good main lines."

Fooks said he and town officials have asked Arizona-American Water Co., which serves the water needs of Youngtown, the Sun Cities and part of Surprise, to come up with a plan. However, Fooks said, the company hasn't been responsive to any of their suggestions.

"This is where we make our stand," said Fooks. "We're trying to fight the good fight and protect our citizens with

the right size fire lines."

Jones said company officials intend to work with the town to meet their expectations for water flow. However, he said, the town's problem doesn't have to do with pipes but with an unnecessary upgrade to the system.

"We're fine with their suggestions and prepared to work with them to fix it," Jones said.

Fooks said it's unfortunate Youngtown doesn't have appropriate water flows in older parts of the town. Almost every other street has 6-inch pipelines, including the new Pulte Home subdivision.

"We want them to show us there's a correct plan," Fooks said. "They need to quit ignoring us."

Jones denied Arizona-American was ignoring the town's concerns.

Along with other area residents, Fooks spoke Wednesday at a public hearing before the Arizona Corporation

Commission in Sun City about Arizona-American's proposed water rate increase.

"It's not fair at all," said Youngtown Vice Mayor Janice Beck. "They're asking us for a price increase of 88 percent and not doing anything with our rates. We want this issue resolved as soon as possible."

Jim Swanson, manager of Sun City's water services department, said the city's pipes and hydrants must be replaced in new areas before residents are allowed to move into their homes. Individuals are allowed to occupy their businesses.

"There have been times where there's been corrosion in pipes or broken pipes," said Swanson. "It's taken water away."

Swanson said the department contracts with two or three different companies that help them with maintenance.

Mitchell Vantrease can be reached at 876-2526 or mvantrease@dailynews-sun.com.

People's Perspective

Support current plan for CAP water use

By Larry Watts, member of CAP Task Force, former President of Governing Board, SCW; Bob Jones, geologist and civil engineer, current chairman of PORA Water Committee, and Dess Chappelle, civil engineer, member of CAP Task Force, principal engineer in construction of CAP canal.

The Groundwater Savings Project (GSP) before the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) is a good and necessary plan. But, if you believe what Cliff Cowles, James Treece and others from the Taxpayers Association are saying, it would be easy to conclude that the Sun Cities' water company (Arizona-American Water Co.) is pulling a fast one on the leaders of the Sun Cities, while our responsible govern-

ment agencies—the ACC and the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR)—are either too stupid or too uncaring to do anything about it. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The agreement to exchange groundwater for CAP water is a requirement of the ADWR, not a trick by the water company. It ensures the ADWR that the designated groundwater will not be used, and it ensures the Sun Cities that the groundwater *can* be used by them if the CAP water is curtailed in any way. No groundwater rights are lost and none can be sold without approval of the ADWR, which is presently allowing no new groundwater rights in the Northwest Valley without replenishment by an equal amount of surface water.

SUPPORT: Current plan for CAP water use, from Page 7

So, be assured that our water company is *not* selling our groundwater to someone else.

It also is true that the Sun Cities are lagging behind the rest of the Northwest Valley in efforts to protect groundwater. As a result, a cone of groundwater depression is developing under the Sun Cities, and subsidence (sinking of the surface) already has started in Sun City.

It has been known for many years that the aquifer under the Sun Cities will not provide us with a continuous supply of water. We simply must use surface water and our best option at present is CAP water. As we make this conversion to using CAP water, it is very important to note that whatever allocation we get will be diminished in times of drought since we are low on the priority list of allocations.

We would, therefore, do well to create or have a reserve supply of water. The best place to store a reserve is in the ground. So, we already have a reserve, and we will continue to have some reserves if we act responsibly now—to curtail our rapid depletion of groundwater.

Some of our residents worry that, if we don't use our groundwater, then communities around us will use it. Not so! It is known that the lateral movement of water in an aquifer is very slow, involving decades. Also, as stated above, groundwater conservation is being practiced by most water users in the Valley.

Those against building a pipeline say we can use our CAP

water in the Agua Fria Recharge Project, thus saving the cost of building a pipeline. Two of the reasons why this plan is a poor one are the significant loss due to evaporation from the recharge ponds and the variable loss due to irregularities in the sediments that comprise the aquifer. But, the most significant reason is that using the CAP water on the golf courses and shutting off the pumping of an equal amount of groundwater is immediate and totally effective in the preservation of groundwater.

It is disingenuous to assert that water is rising in wells located four miles South of the blow-off for the Agua Fria Recharge Project. The rising level in those wells shows the water is going straight down, as expected. As a matter of fact, according to geologic experts, we cannot expect significant help in the Sun Cities from the Agua Fria Recharge Project for many decades. Let's not pin our decisions on the hope that they are wrong.

The pipeline plan was carefully deliberated, and it was accepted by our community leaders. The experts at ADWR agreed with the plan, as did the engineering experts on the staff of the ACC. It is expensive, but it is something we must have! Delays will only compound our costs.

We urge our residents to carefully weigh these arguments and call one or more of the three ACC commissioners—Mr. Mundell, Mr. Irvin and Mr. Spitzer at (602) 542-3933 to support the CAP groundwater savings plan.

People's Perspective

Filtering the water inaccuracies

By Dess Chappellear, Robert Jones and Larry Watts, SCW Water Conservation Study Group

The April 4 letter to the editor, by Marianne Sikler of Sun City West, must be addressed to point out her many inaccurate and misleading statements.

Ms. Sikler says the agreement between the Recreation Centers of Sun City West and the Arizona-American Water Company allows the water company to "adjust costs at a later date." The actual fact is that the price charged for CAP water to the recreation centers is set by contract at 80 percent of our current cost to pump groundwater. The 80 percent factor will not change. What may be adjusted every five years is the pumping costs used as a basis to calculate the CAP water rate. This is a reasonable and prudent approach to rate set-

ting and is a common feature of these types of water sales contracts. Moreover, any rate adjustment would require approval of the ACC.

Ms. Sikler also questions whether there is "unseen benefit to the water company in pumping our unused groundwater." She follows this with comments that the water company is in the business of "selling water and plans to expand its service. If a cache of groundwater is available to them to fulfill future service needs, we can expect them to use it." The truth of the matter is that any new subdivision that Arizona-American may provide service to in the future will be required by state law to become "member land" of the Central Arizona Groundwater Replenishment District in order to obtain a "Certificate of Assured Water

Supply" from the Arizona Department of Water Resource.

Homeowners and business owners in new subdivisions must pay an annual groundwater replenishment tax to the District, which uses the funds to purchase water and replace any groundwater the water company provides to the subdivision. The CAP pipeline project cannot and will not facilitate growth within the company's service territory. A large body of State water law regulates how much new development may occur in the Northwest Valley.

Sikler next attacks the Arizona-American Water Company for planning to make "huge profit" on the pipeline plan. She says that "the fact is the water company reportedly plans to spend \$6 million to expand service, and would like to enlarge the param-

See **FILTERING**, Page 5

FILTERING: The water inaccuracies, from Page 4

ters of the proposed Sun Cities pipeline to serve more customers." Arizona-American has no plans to enlarge the pipeline beyond the size needed to deliver the full CAP water allocation of the Sun Cities to the golf courses. The project's current cost estimate is \$15 million.

Sikler's next misinterpretation or misrepresentation of facts has to do with the exchange of groundwater pumping rights that Sun City West has made with the water company. First of all, the exchange was required by ADWR in order that Sun City West Recreation Centers could utilize the CAP water allocation. This exchange can be terminated at any time Sun City West request it. The so-called "dirty water" that she refers to again reveals a lack of knowledge of the CAP Groundwater Savings Project or CAP water itself.

CAP water is presently being used extensively in Phoenix, Scottsdale, Mesa, Glendale, Peoria, Tempe, Surprise and Anthem. Unlike us, the communities mentioned have preceded the Sun Cities and are acting as responsible stewards of our natural resources, cutting the use of

groundwater and making use of a renewable water resource—a crucial alternative in our desert environment.

Sikler's comment about the Sun City Taxpayers Association lawsuit against the Sun City Recreation Centers is really out of place. However, it is true that the obstructionist action caused by the lawsuit does affect Sun City West as well. The longer the delay for building the pipeline, the greater the expense not only financially, but also in continued use of high quality groundwater for irrigation!

In Ms. Sikler's interpretation of the contract between the Sun City West Recreation Board and the water company, she estimates the increased costs of water bills over a 43-year period as being "an increase of 40 to 47 percent..." While the Groundwater Savings Project will cause monthly water bills to rise, water rates in the Sun Cities are currently far lower than any of our neighboring communities which have made appropriate moves to reduce groundwater usage and move to renewable water sources. Even following any rate increases related to the Groundwa-

ter Savings Project that may be approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission, water rates in the Sun Cities will be well below the rates of our neighboring cities.

Sikler's next paragraph is vague, but I think she is referring to the proposed CAWCD recharge project to be built in the Agua Fria River bed. She refers to estimates that Sun City West's participation in this project would be 237% cheaper than participation in the Groundwater Savings Project. I know of no geologists who will state that the CAWCD recharge project will have a great or immediate benefit to Sun City West or Sun City. However, applying CAP water directly on our golf courses will allow us to shut down our pumps for much of the year. This is a significant step toward preserving our high quality groundwater.

If the CAWCD recharge project is effective, we would still profit by it at some future date. Referring to the Groundwater Savings project as a "maverick program" reveals an ignorance of ongoing projects, geology, and foremost, of hydrology.

Lastly, Sikler comments on the amount of water required to take care of Recreation Centers of Sun City West needs. She says the CAP water "will make no measurable contribution toward conservation." The Sun City West allocation of CAP water is presently 2,372 acre-feet per year. In the year 2001, we used 3,517.07 acre-feet of water on our seven golf courses. The CAP allotment would replace 67.5% of our total golf course water use (hardly the "minimal" use she refers to), and we are also making great strides in reducing our water use for irrigation each year through a concerted conservation program.

If we take measures to provide CAP water to irrigate our golf courses now, we can save groundwater and assure our property values far into the future. The Sun City West Water Conservation Study Group is also considering using about 1,000 acre-feet of effluent, which may become available for irrigation on our golf courses. When you add that to the 2,372 acre-feet of CAP water, it totals 3,372 acre-feet per year. With this total, our golf course would be assured an adequate water supply.

Ms. Sikler fails to realize that planning for the future, as has been done with the Groundwater Savings Project, may actually reduce future water bills. If we continue to exhaust our groundwater and have to look to other sources of water, few remain. Central Arizona Project water is the major remaining source in Arizona. If our water provider has to use CAP water in our homes in the future, it will be much more costly than using it on our golf courses. It will require the construction of an expensive water treatment plant. These costs were considered and were found to be a very costly alternative to the plan being implemented. When that comes to pass, there will be limited or no water available for our golf courses and the value of homes in the area will decline drastically.

The Native American Tribes of Arizona control a large block of the CAP water allocation. To acquire some of this water at a later time will be very expensive, whether we need it for our golf courses or in our homes.

Daily News-Sun

THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2002

Groundwater allotted for golf needs

SUN CITY WEST: New law extends industrial use permits to water courses through 2012

MICHAEL MARESH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West's golf courses won't go brown in 2005, thanks to a new law.

A House bill that became law May 8 extends Sun City West's "General Industrial Use" permits another seven years. The permits allow the community to pump groundwater to irrigate golf courses. "What this does is it extends the use so we will have time to build that pipeline," said Rep. Mike Gleason of Sun City West, R-District 15, who sponsored the bill. District

15 covers Sun City West, Sun City south of Grand Avenue and much of Surprise.

Gleason said the seven-year extension would have been illegal without the bill, which will enable Sun City West to use groundwater on its golf courses through 2012.

House Bill 2064 outlines specific conditions for the permits to withdraw groundwater in the Phoenix Active Management Area up to seven years after the date the permits would otherwise expire.

Bob Jones, who handles water issues for Sun City West's Property Owners and Residents Association, said four of the retirement community's seven GIUs would have expired in 2005.

Sun City, on the other hand, was grandfathered under the Groundwater Management Act of 1980 so its

groundwater pumping permits were protected, Jones said.

"Sun City is a lot older than Sun City West," he said. "Sun City is grandfathered in. It means they do not expire."

Jones said the extension will be invaluable to the retirement community.

"It gives us time to do a lot of things," he said.

In order for the GIU permit to be extended for seven years, a contract to use Central Arizona Project water instead of groundwater had to be entered into on or before Jan. 1, and construction on a pipeline to deliver the CAP water has to be substantially under way by 2007.

The extension would be terminated if progress toward completion of the pipeline to transport CAP water to the golf courses has not occurred in a

timely fashion.

The Arizona Corporation Commission is scheduled to make its decision on the pipeline on July 11.

The proposed pipeline would bring CAP water to Sun City for use on golf courses and would tie into the already-constructed pipeline in Sun City West to serve golf courses there as well. The pipeline would run south along 99th Avenue, then follow Del Webb Boulevard and branch off to the golf courses.

Sun City Taxpayers Association officials insist using an existing recharge basin near the Agua Fria River north of Jomax Road would be more cost effective than building the \$16.4 million pipeline and would still recharge the aquifer from which groundwater is pumped.

Michael Maresch can be reached at 876-2513 or mmaresch@aztrib.com.

Jan. 2002

Jan 2002 SCW Rec Center News

Water: hardly a dry subject in Sun City West

The availability and cost of water is an increasingly important issue to the Recreation Centers of Sun City West and to our residents. The Legislature is considering water law recommendations that could impose a new tax on communities that mine groundwater – and that primarily is the Sun Cities.

The tax plan is included in suggestions from the Governor's Water Management Commission, which spent much of last year looking at Valley water issues. Among other things, it noted that the two Sun Cities combined (population about 65,000) use more unreplenished groundwater than the combined cities of Phoenix and Peoria, (population 2 million-plus). This fact has caused considerable resentment among officials elsewhere in the Valley.

We have been accused of not doing our part in replenishment, in use of CAP water, and in conservation. The argument is that incorporated municipalities have approved costly bond issues and higher taxes and water rates to implement the steps the Sun Cities have resisted.

That simplistic explanation for the suggested tax overlooks many of the serious and costly water-saving efforts your Recreation Centers have made. It seems focused instead on the misguided efforts of the Sun City Taxpayers Association to first oppose the use of CAP water on local golf courses, and, when that failed, to oppose the method by which the Sun City Centers approved the plan.

Having lost a round in Superior Court, the Taxpayers group in December said it planned to litigate for another three years, a step that could bring punitive legislation down upon the two retirement communities.

Using the Central Arizona Project water on our golf courses would save an equal amount of groundwater currently pumped for irrigation from the aquifer under the two communities. That is why CAP water use was recommended by a local study group whose members came from the Recreation Centers in both communities, from PORA and the Sun City HOA, and from Citizens Water Resources.



We have a contract with Citizens to use CAP water on five of our golf courses which will allow us to stop pumping well water. Under that accord, we would save money -- about 20 percent of what we currently spend to deliver well water -- while leaving the aquifer untouched.

In the last four years, the Association has spent \$1.1 million to improve the efficiency of our irrigation systems, everything from installing weather stations, better sprinkler heads, more cost-efficient pumps, and controls.

We also spent money on an independent consultant to audit our work, and to get suggestions on what more we could do. In his November 11 report, Don Ackley of Palm Desert, CA, found that we were considerably more efficient in our water use than the 65 courses studied in the Palm Springs area. He said of his findings at Deer Valley: *"The current irrigation efficiency of 89.5 percent will be difficult to improve upon. It is the highest irrigation efficiency that I have ever measured."*

Simply put, we are not wasting water here. Like incorporated communities, we have spent money to improve our water use efficiency, to upgrade our facilities and, as we cut down on the irrigated area of the courses in coming years, to conserve.

We do not want to have our residents hit with a punitive ground water mining tax. We are working to make sure our elected representatives know of our considerable efforts, as well as the public.

The Sun City West Water Committee will keep tabs on the proposed replenishment tax. Involved are Dess Chappellear, Carole Hubbs, Bob Jones, Todd Patty and Larry Watts, all previously active in our water studies and conservation efforts.

State Senator Ed Cirillo, one of our Centers members, and Rep. Mike Gleason already have met with us and pledged to work with us to help tell our story to other lawmakers.

Watch for additional information on this important topic in future issues. Water is anything but dry