

Phoenix Drought Situation: FAQs

Is Phoenix in a drought?

Yes. Most of the state of Arizona, including the Phoenix metropolitan area, is in the fourth consecutive year of less than average rainfall, signifying drought conditions. In fact, six out of the last seven years have been below normal. These last seven years have been drier than during the drought of 1898-1904, which led to the construction of the original Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River. If some of the climate forecasts are correct, the current drought conditions could extend for years to come.

In January, the Phoenix City Council approved the recommendation of the Water Services Director to put Phoenix on a Stage One drought footing. Although Phoenix has enough water to meet current and future demands, a worsening drought could mean restrictions by summer of 2004. It is only prudent to begin to respond to drought before we get to that stage.

Since we live in a desert, aren't we always in a drought?

No, but annual runoff in 60 of the last 100 years has been below the long-term average on the Salt and Verde watersheds. The people who lived in the Valley 100 years ago probably understood the impacts of drought better than today's residents and had a healthy respect for water in the desert. Today's growth, uses of water (pools, lawns, golf courses, fountains) and ease of obtaining water can mask the fact that we do, indeed, live in a desert.

Should I be concerned that we'll run out of water during a drought?

There is no cause for concern at this time. While nobody can predict nature, Phoenix is actually a good place to be during a drought. As a desert community, we are very vulnerable to drought and the impacts of little rainfall. That is why so much effort and so much investment have been put into assuring a long-term water supply. If drought worsens, sacrifices will have to be made. On balance, however, this desert community is better situated to respond to dry conditions than many locations where water has been abundant and taken for granted.

Is there a state drought plan?

There is no statewide drought plan, but numerous state agencies work with local communities and governments to develop regional plans that take into account the great differences in water supplies, water uses, population, climate and geography across the state. Each water provider or municipality approaches the situation from a unique perspective and each response may be a little bit different.

From where does the city of Phoenix get its water?

The city of Phoenix water supply comes primarily from the Salt River Project (SRP) which brings water by canal and pipeline from the Salt and Verde Rivers, and the Central Arizona Project (CAP) which transports Colorado River water. Both are surface water sources, starting as snow or rain captured in their respective watersheds. A very small

amount of Phoenix' supply comes from wells. Some irrigation is done with treated wastewater.

What has Phoenix done to plan for drought?

Phoenix has purchased and stored additional surface water and improved our well fields to provide a backup supply so demand can be met when drought affects the city. When the Salt River Project (SRP) reduces deliveries, the city can use additional Central Arizona Project (CAP) water or pump well fields, and look for new opportunities to save water by irrigating with reclaimed treated wastewater.

Does Phoenix have a drought response plan?

Yes. It is called the Drought Management Plan and it is part of Phoenix City Code (Chapter 37, Sections 121 through 130.2). The Drought Management Plan is implemented when Phoenix projects that the available water supply cannot meet total customer demand. The plan contains four stages including varied levels of voluntary and mandatory conservation measures, education, possible usage restrictions, and possible surcharges, as well as possible bans and penalties for misuse of water. View the drought plan at: phoenix.gov/WATER/drought.html.

Are drought restrictions in place in Phoenix?

Yes. For city departments a mandatory 5% reduction in water use is now in place. At this time, Phoenix has called for voluntary reductions in water use by all other customers. For information on what you can do to help with the drought, contact the Water Conservation office at: conservation@phoenix.gov.

What about golf courses? Don't they use a lot of water?

Grass of any kind in the desert takes a lot of water to remain green. On average, it takes about 39 inches of water per year to keep turf grass healthy. When appropriately used, grass is a recreational amenity that makes Phoenix an oasis in the desert. Park turf areas are for play and public enjoyment. Golf courses are a recreational asset that contributes heavily to the influx of tourism dollars to Phoenix which, in turn, creates jobs in Phoenix. Municipal parks and public golf courses are among the best monitored and most efficient in the use of irrigation water. Managers use real-time data on solar exposure, humidity, wind direction and speed to assess how much moisture is lost from the turf areas each day and how much must be put back. That same grass management data is available to all citizens. Write to us for free information on lawn watering at: conservation@phoenix.gov.

Don't car washes waste a lot of water?

Research has shown that commercial car washes actually use far less water per vehicle than does the average person washing a car at home. This is due to a number of factors, including high pressure sprayers, and the partial re-cycling of final rinse water at some car washes for soaping the next vehicle. If washing at home, use a biodegradable soap and park the car where runoff water will be used by the grass or other plants. Also, use a spring-loaded spray nozzle on the end of the hose to shut off the water when you are not using it.

When will Phoenix declare drought restrictions?

Phoenix will declare a drought when projected future supplies will not match projected future demand. In all probability, this will happen in January 2003 when SRP announces a reduction in deliveries from that system's canals.

What will be required if drought restrictions become necessary?

At the present time, only Phoenix city departments are required to implement drought water use restrictions. In January, all citizens will be asked to help do their part. Restrictions for most users only become effective in the later stages of drought response. The Phoenix Drought Management Plan outlines the steps that are taken during drought. That plan contains four stages with varied levels of voluntary and mandatory conservation. The entire plan may be viewed on-line at: phoenix.gov/WATER/drought.html.

STAGE ONE. Most actions are voluntary, including a requested 5 percent use reduction. Mandatory conservation measures for city departments, and a voluntary shutdown of decorative fountains are included measures, as well as possible restrictions on time of day use for construction water.

STAGE TWO. A 10 percent water use reduction by all city of Phoenix departments, and a 10 percent voluntary reduction requested of all customers. A surcharge on some uses of water also is possible.

STAGE THREE. All of the measures above remain in effect, plus mandatory restrictions on lawn watering, a possible ban on filling or refilling water features unless reclaimed wastewater is used, and a possible curtailment of water for construction purposes. Also, stage three may include a halt to new building permits.

STAGE FOUR. The final stage of Phoenix's Drought Management Plan, requires all of the above, plus a mandatory 20 percent decrease for city departments, and all other water users. Additionally, a possible ban on new landscaping, a ban on filling new pools or refilling pools, and a shut down of all water features are included in the stage. No new water service connections and the possible termination of service for repeated misuse of water signify the crisis faced during this stage.

Does Phoenix promote water conservation?

Phoenix promotes water conservation year-round and has done so since 1982. In addition to partnering with other Valley cities in the "Water - Use It Wisely" media campaign, Phoenix's Water Conservation Office has programs for schools and teachers, business and industry, and landscaping and irrigation. These programs include not only education material, but classes as well.

What can I do to conserve water?

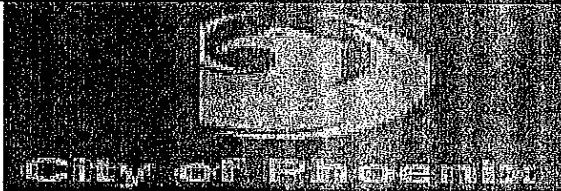
First, do a quick in-home check to see how you use water and whether your family is engaging in wasteful practices. Second, check out Water Services Department portion of this Web site, phoenix.gov/WATERSERVICES/index.html for information. Third visit www.wateruseitwisely.com. Listed there are dozens of ways to conserve water, such as: using a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway and sidewalk; fixing toilet and

faucet leaks; running your dishwasher and clothes washer only when you have full loads; and turning off the faucet when shaving or brushing your teeth. Also, call the city of Phoenix's Water Conservation Office at 602-261-8367 or e-mail us at conservation@phoenix.gov, for more conservation, leak detection, landscaping, and irrigation tips.

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