

REFERENCE TITLE: Big Chino subbasin; Verde River

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-seventh Legislature
First Regular Session
2025

HB 2731

Introduced by
Representatives Nguyen: Bliss

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTION 45-555, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING TO GROUNDWATER
WITHDRAWAL.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:
2 Section 1. Section 45-555, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
3 read:
4 45-555. Transportation of groundwater withdrawn in Big Chino
5 subbasin of the Verde River groundwater basin to
6 initial active management area; exception
7 A. A city or town that owns land consisting of historically
8 irrigated acres in the Big Chino ~~sub-basin~~ SUBBASIN of the Verde River
9 groundwater basin, as designated by order of the director dated June 21,
10 1984, or a city or town with the consent of the landowner, may withdraw
11 from the land for transportation to EITHER an adjacent initial active
12 management area OR THE HEADWATERS OF THE VERDE RIVER WITHIN THE BIG CHINO
13 SUBBASIN an amount of groundwater determined pursuant to this section.
14 The amount of groundwater that may be withdrawn from the land pursuant to
15 this section shall not exceed:
16 1. In any year two times the annual transportation allotment for
17 the land determined pursuant to subsection B OF THIS SECTION.
18 2. For any period of ten consecutive years computed in continuing
19 progressive series beginning in the year transportation of groundwater
20 from the land begins, ten times the annual transportation allotment for
21 the land.
22 B. The director shall determine the annual transportation allotment
23 as follows:
24 1. Determine each farm or portion of a farm owned or leased by the
25 city or town in the ~~sub-basin~~ SUBBASIN.
26 2. For each such farm or portion of a farm, determine the
27 historically irrigated acres retired from irrigation. Multiply the sum of
28 those historically irrigated acres by three acre-feet per acre.
29 C. In making the determination required by subsection B OF THIS
30 SECTION, the director shall rely only on credible documentary evidence
31 submitted by the city or town or otherwise obtained by the department.
32 D. For the purposes of subsections A, B and C OF THIS SECTION:
33 1. "Documentary evidence" means correspondence, contracts, other
34 agreements, aerial photography, affidavits, receipts or official records.
35 2. "Farm" means an area of land in the ~~sub-basin~~ SUBBASIN that is
36 or was served by a common irrigation water distribution system.
37 3. "Historically irrigated acres" means acres of land overlying an
38 aquifer that were irrigated with groundwater at any time between January
39 1, 1975 and January 1, 1990.
40 E. A city or town in the Prescott active management area may
41 withdraw and transport eight thousand sixty-eight acre-feet per year of
42 groundwater from the Big Chino ~~sub-basin~~ SUBBASIN of the Verde River
43 groundwater basin to the Prescott active management area if the city or
44 town does both of the following:

- 1 1. Relinquishes a supply of water from the central Arizona project
2 allocated to the city or town.
- 3 2. Enters into a federally-approved settlement of the water rights
4 claims of an Indian tribe in the Prescott active management area.
- 5 F. Notwithstanding the volume limitation in subsection E OF THIS
6 SECTION, in any year in which a city or town that qualifies under
7 subsection E OF THIS SECTION delivers more than two hundred thirty-one
8 acre-feet of water to an Indian tribe for use on its reservation in the
9 Prescott active management area pursuant to a federally-approved Indian
10 water rights settlement, the city or town may withdraw and transport
11 additional groundwater from the Big Chino ~~sub-basin~~ SUBBASIN to the
12 Prescott active management area in an amount equal to the amount by which
13 those deliveries exceed two hundred thirty-one acre-feet.
- 14 G. Groundwater that is withdrawn and transported pursuant to
15 subsections E and F OF THIS SECTION may be delivered to and used by any
16 city, town or Indian tribe in the Prescott active management area without
17 regard to whether that entity withdraws and transports the water.