

REFERENCE TITLE: rural groundwater management; work groups

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-seventh Legislature
Second Regular Session
2026

SB 1559

Introduced by
Senator Dunn

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTION 41-6054, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; AMENDING TITLE 45, CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE 9, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES, BY ADDING SECTION 45-580.01; RELATING TO GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Section 41-6054, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
3 read:

4 41-6054. Powers of district

5 A. This state recognizes the special expertise of the districts in
6 the fields of land, soil, water and natural resources management within
7 the boundaries of the district. A district is empowered to:

8 1. Conduct surveys, investigations and research relating to the
9 character of the soil, soil erosion prevention within a farm or ranch,
10 methods of cultivation, farm and range practices, seeding, eradicating
11 noxious growths and invasive vegetation and any other measures that will
12 aid farm and range operations, disseminate information and educate
13 landowners pertaining thereto, and carry on research programs with or
14 without the cooperation of this state or its agencies or the United States
15 or its agencies.

16 2. Create and administer a soil health program that promotes
17 implementation of soil health practices, research projects, demonstration
18 projects, educational projects or other activities appropriate to promote
19 the continuing capacity for soil to function as a vital living biological
20 system that sustains plants, animals and humans, increased soil organic
21 matter, improved soil structure, water-holding and nutrient-holding
22 capacity or nutrient cycling.

23 3. Conduct demonstration projects within the district on lands
24 owned or controlled by the state or any of its agencies with the consent
25 and cooperation of the agency having jurisdiction of the land, and on any
26 other lands within the district on obtaining the consent of the landowner
27 or the necessary rights or interests in the land, in order to demonstrate
28 by example the means, methods and measures by which water, soil and soil
29 resources may be conserved and soil erosion and soil washing may be
30 prevented and controlled.

31 4. Cooperate, coordinate and enter into agreements with a
32 landowner, an operator or any agency or subdivision of the state or
33 federal government to carry on programs of watershed improvement, soil
34 erosion prevention, methods of cultivation, cropping practices, land
35 leveling and improvement on agricultural lands, and programs limited to
36 methods of proper range land use, reseeding and eradicating noxious growth
37 and invasive vegetation on grazing lands, all within the limits of an
38 individual farm or ranch and subject to the conditions the supervisors
39 deem necessary.

40 5. Acquire, by purchase, exchange, lease or otherwise, any
41 property, real or personal, or rights or interest in any property,
42 maintain, administer and improve any properties acquired, receive income
43 from any property or right or interest in property and expend it in
44 carrying out the purposes of this chapter, and sell, lease or otherwise

1 dispose of any property or interest in property in furtherance of the
2 purposes of this chapter.

3 6. Make available, on the terms it prescribes to landowners within
4 the district, agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment,
5 fertilizer, seed and other material or equipment as will assist the
6 landowners to carry on operations on their lands for the purposes and
7 programs authorized by this chapter.

8 7. Develop, publish and bring to the attention of landowners within
9 the district comprehensive plans for conserving soil and water resources
10 within the district that specify in such detail as may be feasible the
11 acts, procedures, performances and avoidances necessary or desirable to
12 effect the plans.

13 8. Apply for, receive and spend monies from the Arizona water
14 protection fund pursuant to title 45, chapter 12 to be used in individual
15 districts or in cooperation with other districts, persons, cities, towns,
16 counties, special districts and Indian communities for projects consistent
17 with title 45, chapter 12.

18 9. Employ agents, engineers, attorneys or other employees not
19 readily available from existing state agencies.

20 10. Sue and be sued in the name of the district, have a seal, which
21 shall be judicially noticed, have perpetual succession unless terminated
22 as provided in this chapter, make and execute contracts and other
23 instruments necessary or convenient to exercise its powers and make, amend
24 and repeal rules not inconsistent with this chapter to effect its purposes
25 and powers.

26 11. Apply for grants and accept donations, gifts and contributions
27 in monies, services, materials or otherwise, and use or expend them in
28 carrying on its operations.

29 12. Organize and establish an education center to increase the
30 knowledge of natural resources in this state through the following
31 methods:

32 (a) Offering technical guidance and training to agricultural
33 producers.

34 (b) Publishing scholarly materials.

35 (c) Providing educational and training opportunities, both inside
36 and outside of the district.

37 (d) Conducting or sponsoring scientific studies that affect natural
38 resources in this state.

39 (e) Increasing public awareness of water conservation statewide,
40 including water conservation methods and best management practices.

41 (f) Increasing public awareness of soil health practices statewide.

42 13. Apply for, receive and spend monies from the water
43 infrastructure finance authority of Arizona pursuant to title 49, chapter
44 8 to be used in individual districts or in cooperation with other
45 districts and cities, towns, counties, special districts, Indian

1 communities and other persons for projects consistent with title 49,
2 chapter 8.

3 14. CONDUCT SURVEYS, INVESTIGATIONS AND RESEARCH RELATING TO THE
4 HEALTH OF GROUNDWATER IN THE DISTRICT'S GROUNDWATER BASIN.

5 15. ASSIST RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT WORK GROUPS ESTABLISHED
6 PURSUANT TO SECTION 45-580.01 AS FOLLOWS:

7 (a) IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE DISTRICT IN EACH RURAL GROUNDWATER
8 MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP, THE DISTRICTS SHALL COORDINATE THEIR SUPPORT OF THE
9 RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP.

10 (b) HOLD AT LEAST ONE JOINT MEETING WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE RURAL
11 GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP. IF THERE ARE MULTIPLE DISTRICTS THAT
12 SHARE JURISDICTION WITH A RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT GROUP, THE
13 DISTRICTS MAY HOLD A JOINT MEETING.

14 (c) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31 OF EACH YEAR, THE DISTRICTS SHALL
15 SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OF THEIR FINDINGS AND
16 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THEIR COLLABORATION WITH RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT
17 WORK GROUPS.

18 B. A provision of law with respect to acquiring, operating or
19 disposing of property by other public bodies is not applicable to a
20 district organized under this chapter unless specifically stated therein.

21 C. After the formation of any district under this chapter, all
22 participation thereunder shall be voluntary, notwithstanding any provision
23 of this chapter to the contrary.

24 D. A district may send to the board and the Arizona water
25 protection fund commission established by title 45, chapter 12 written
26 recommendations for geographic areas to be emphasized, issues of concern
27 and measures to implement title 45, chapter 12. A district that sends
28 written recommendations to the commission shall request information from
29 at least the following:

30 1. The director of the department of water resources and the board.

31 2. The federal and state fish, wildlife, recreation and natural
32 resource agencies.

33 3. County and municipal entities.

34 4. The public.

35 E. The district shall develop procedures to ensure adequate
36 participation in the public involvement process prescribed by subsection D
37 of this section.

38 Sec. 2. Title 45, chapter 2, article 9, Arizona Revised Statutes,
39 is amended by adding section 45-580.01, to read:

40 45-580.01. Rural groundwater management work groups; members;
41 consolidated report

42 A. A RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP SHALL BE ESTABLISHED
43 IN EACH GROUNDWATER BASIN. THE NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
44 BOARD AND SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT THAT ARE LOCATED IN EACH
45 GROUNDWATER BASIN SHALL APPOINT WORK GROUP MEMBERS. EACH WORK GROUP SHALL

1 CONTAIN AFFECTED PARTIES AND LOCAL EXPERTS, INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL
2 PRODUCERS.

3 B. IF A GROUNDWATER BASIN CONTAINS ONE OR MORE NATURAL RESOURCE
4 CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OR SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, THE
5 DISTRICTS SHALL COOPERATE TO ENSURE THAT THE RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT
6 WORK GROUP CONTAINS A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF EACH DISTRICT CONSISTENT
7 WITH THE PERCENTAGE OF THE GROUNDWATER BASIN THAT IS LOCATED IN EACH
8 DISTRICT.

9 C. RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP MEMBERS SERVE WITHOUT
10 COMPENSATION BUT ARE ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES PURSUANT TO
11 TITLE 38, CHAPTER 4, ARTICLE 2.

12 D. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PROVIDE EACH RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT
13 WORK GROUP WITH ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AS REQUESTED BY THE WORK GROUP.

14 E. ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31 OF EACH YEAR, EACH RURAL GROUNDWATER
15 MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT OF ITS FINDINGS AND
16 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES IN RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT TO THE
17 DEPARTMENT. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONSOLIDATE THE REPORTS AND PROVIDE THE
18 CONSOLIDATED REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE
19 SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SHALL PROVIDE A COPY OF THE
20 CONSOLIDATED REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE.