

Senate Engrossed

rural groundwater management; work groups

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

# SENATE BILL 1559

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.