



**Testimony of Morgan Ross,
Senior Analyst from Environmental Defense Fund and
Member of the Water for Arizona Coalition**

Arizona Department of Water Resources Public Meeting
on Designation of Hualapai Valley Groundwater Basin
as an Irrigation Non-Expansion Area
Kingman, Arizona
Sept. 20, 2022

Director Buschatzke, (or ADWR staff presenter) and the Kingman/Mohave County water community:

My name is Morgan Ross and I'm with the Environmental Defense Fund, one of five members of the Water for Arizona Coalition. Our coalition is a community of Arizonans who support innovative practices and policies to ensure a reliable water supply to meet the state's needs. We have 60,000 Arizona resident members, and we are a public interest entity that supports water security for all people in Arizona, with a primary focus on state water policy.

We're happy to learn more about the recent studies and information pertaining to the possible designation of an Irrigation Non-Expansion (INA) area in the Hualapai Valley Groundwater Basin. We support the designation of the Hualapai Basin as an INA.

Our Coalition believes in the use of fact-based information to support proposals being brought forward to improve water security in Arizona, as well as the importance of robust public engagement at the local level. That is what brings us here today.

I'd like to briefly state a few striking facts affecting this region:

- Recent U.S. Census Bureau data shows the population of the City of Kingman increased 51 percent over the last 20 years and Mohave County grew by 35 percent.
- A USGS report published last year shows the installation of agricultural wells and related pumping have also been increasing in the Hualapai Valley Basin.
 - In fact, irrigation pumping increased from 8,000 acre-feet in 2014 to 35,000 acre-feet in 2017 – an increase of over 400 percent in three years.
- Wells monitored by ADWR indicate some water levels have declined by 40 to 48 feet in the Kingman Sub-basin since 1990, and the USGS projects declines of about 85 to 130 ft. by the year 2050.

It is now well-documented by both the USGS and ADWR that the Hualapai Valley Basin has been experiencing rapid declines in water levels in the aquifer and is in a state of groundwater overdraft, a condition where water is pumped from the aquifer faster than it can be naturally replenished.

All of which has raised concerns with the local community and water managers in Mohave County about the severity of these stresses on the groundwater system.

We recognize that while INAs might not be an appropriate tool in all areas, they are one of the very few tools that are currently available to rural Arizona communities to help protect their water supplies. INAs can provide important protections for vulnerable groundwater resources for communities like Mohave County

Local residents and our state and local water managers need to ask themselves what policies will sufficiently safeguard these groundwater supplies for the future? Rural communities often depend on groundwater as their primary domestic water source and need tools to help protect their water supplies, preserve their rural heritage and wellbeing, and secure their economic future.

Designating the Hualapai Basin as an INA is a step in the right direction.

We look forward to providing additional written comments by September 30th. Thank you for your time.