



Guest Opinion by Ted Cooke, Published in Arizona Capitol Times, March 24, 2016

Wheeling, recovering and exchanging water will help secure our future

The Central Arizona Project is one of the largest water projects in the country, delivering nearly 60 percent of Arizona's share of Colorado River water to cities, farms, industries and Native American tribes in central and southern Arizona.

Knowing the value of reliable water supplies to our region, CAP, the State of Arizona, the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation and CAP customers and stakeholders have been working to develop a process to enhance the flexibility of the CAP system and help ensure the reliability of the water on which we all depend.

One of our most recent achievements has been developing a draft "CAP System Use Agreement" to resolve the legal, financial and operational issues related to using the CAP system to move not only current Colorado River water but also to transport additional or supplemental water supplies to benefit customers in Pima, Pinal and Maricopa counties. The process is known as 'wheeling.'

The agreement also provides a mechanism for our customers to 'exchange' their CAP water supplies with other customers. For example, Phoenix and Tucson have agreed to store a portion of Phoenix's unused CAP water in Tucson, where there is capacity to store the water underground. When Phoenix needs to 'recover' that water, it would take delivery of a portion of Tucson's CAP water and, in exchange, Tucson would recover the water previously stored by Phoenix. These exchanges have the potential to enhance the effective use of Colorado River water.

In addition, the draft addresses the eventual recovery of the trillions of gallons of Colorado River water stored underground over the past two decades by CAP and the Arizona Water Banking Authority on behalf of CAP customers, for use as a supplemental supply when CAP supplies are reduced during Colorado River shortages.

The "CAP System Use Agreement" is another example of how CAP continues to work closely with our customers, the State of Arizona, our partner states in the Southwest and the Federal government to develop innovative and achievable solutions to the water risks we all face. By taking advantage of CAP's multi-billion dollar infrastructure to enhance our flexibility we are better able to meet the water challenges ahead. For more information about this or any other CAP initiative, visit www.cap-az.com.