



Position Statement on the Verde River Watershed  
October 2006

The Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) calls for immediate protection of the Verde River Watershed, joining with other national, state, and local organizations voicing strong concerns about existing and proposed unsustainable aquifer overdraws from the watershed. The AWF calls for completion of an Environmental Impact Statement process, with a full range of alternatives, including a “No Action” alternative, to address broad and cumulative impacts to wildlife, fish, and plant species from the proposed Big Chino Water Ranch Pipeline Project. Comprehensive mitigation planning would be a necessary component for each proposed alternative.

Science based plans for sustainability and conservation on Arizona’s watersheds have not been successfully implemented or established which protect the state’s wonderfully diverse habitats and wildlife from severe loss and depletion. Watershed groundwater and aquifer overdraws in Arizona are continuing to accelerate. Loss of our river environments will severely impact economies and quality of life in communities around the state. Most of Arizona’s rivers-the Salt, Gila, Aqua Fria, and San Pedro-are already dry or soon will be, disappearing for all time largely due to lack of action and the political will to protect them. The few that remain, like the Verde River, are at immediate risk due to Arizona water law which was written more than a century ago, and recently granted and planned new acquisition of groundwater pumping rights for residential, municipal, and industrial/commercial uses.