



# City of Prescott

## Council Subcommittee on Water Issues

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December 2, 2025 | 9:30 AM  
201 N Montezuma Street  
Council Chambers, 1st Floor  
Prescott, AZ 86301

### MINUTES

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Rusing called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Chair Rusing  
Member Fruhwirth  
Member Garing

**3. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

- A. Approval of the October 7, 2025 Council Subcommittee on Water Issues Meeting Minutes.

Chair Rusing asked for clarification on the water usage calculation for the restroom project at 218 N. Cortez Street.

Water Resource Manager Brian Ruiz responded that there was a typographical error in the non-residential water usage table for 218 North Cortez and was corrected, revising restroom water demand from 0.42 to 0.21 acre-feet, and the tables were updated accordingly.

**MOTION BY CHAIR RUSING TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 7, 2025 MEETING MINUTES; SECONDED BY MEMBER FRUHWIRTH: PASSED (3 - 0)**

- B. Presentation & Discussion Regarding the 2022 Water Management Policy - Current Residential & Non-Residential Water Budget Overview for July 1, 2025 through November 19, 2025.

Mr. Ruiz presented a review of residential and non-residential water budgets for projects approved between July 1 and November 19, 2025, in accordance with the amended 2022 Water Policy. During this period, six residential projects were approved totaling 1.76 acre-feet, leaving 23.24 acre-feet remaining in the residential budget. Five non-residential projects were approved administratively and one by Council, totaling 4.05 acre-feet, leaving 20.96 acre-feet remaining in the non-residential budget.

Member Garing asked if unused water is carried forward.

Mr. Ruiz responded that per the water policy, water that wasn't allocated can carry over from one period to another.

Mr. Ruiz continued presenting the table summarizing water use approved administratively under existing contracts between July 1 and November 19, 2025. During this period, 16 projects were approved totaling 2.77 acre-feet of water, including two single-family residences in Chino Valley, three non-residential contracts, and the remaining projects consisting of single-family residential developments under groundwater subdivisions or development agreements. These projects are not counted toward the residential or non-residential water budgets and are provided for informational purposes only.

***This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.***

- C. Presentation & Discussion Regarding the January 2026 through June 2026 Residential & Non-Residential Water Budgets, in Accordance with the Amended 2022 Water Management Policy, Guideline No. 11.

Mr. Ruiz presented the proposed residential and non-residential water budgets for the January–June 2026 period, as required by the amended 2022 Water Management Policy, which directs City Council to set semiannual budgets at the last meetings in June and December. For informational purposes, staff reviewed water usage from the prior July–December 2025 budget cycle, noting 1.76 acre-feet used for residential projects and 4.05 acre-feet used for non-residential projects, leaving remaining balances of 23.24 and 20.96 acre-feet, respectively. Projects expected during the upcoming budget cycle based on recent pre-application (PAC) activity and permit trends were summarized. Estimated water demand for these potential projects totals approximately 25 acre-feet; however, historical trends indicate that only 20–50% of estimated demand typically materializes. These estimates are provided for planning and informational purposes only and do not represent guaranteed or approved water usage.

Member Garing asked how staff determines that actual water usage on approved projects is typically lower than initial estimates, and whether this determination is based on reviewing water meter records over time following development.

Mr. Ruiz clarified that the lower percentage reflects water requests received during prior budget periods compared to the amount budgeted, not actual post-construction water usage. Actual water use is determined after projects are built and permitted, which occurs outside the budget period. Based on past trends, staff estimates that water requests in the upcoming six-month period may range from 6 to 13 acre-feet, though this could change if request activity increases.

**MOTION BY MEMBER FRUHWIRTH TO RECOMMEND 25 ACRE FEET FOR BOTH RESIDENTIAL & NON-RESIDENTIAL WATER BUDGETS FOR JANUARY THROUGH JUNE 2026 TO COUNCIL; SECONDED BY CHAIR RUSING. (PASSED 3-0)**

- D. Presentation & Discussion Regarding a PFAS Treatment Study Update.

Water Operations Superintendent Nathan Graham presented an update on the City's PFAS consultant contract. He explained that PFAS is a general name for

fluoridated carbon chains commonly found in consumer products and are resistant to degradation in the environment. In May 2022, City wells were tested and low levels of PFAS were detected in most wells, with Airport Well 5 showing the highest levels and subsequently being taken offline. Mr. Graham reviewed EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) regulatory changes, noting that in 2023 the EPA established a maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 4 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA, significantly lower than prior guidance. The city responded by increasing PFAS monitoring, moving from monthly to quarterly testing. Some Chino Valley and airport wells are below the MCL, while Airport Well 5 remains above the limit. In Fall 2024, the City issued a request for qualifications to obtain consultant support for evaluating treatment options and future well development. In May 2025, the EPA revised PFAS regulations, maintaining the MCL for PFOS and PFOA and extending the compliance deadline to May 2031. The PFAS consultant contract will assess PFAS sources, groundwater movement, and potential new well sites at the Airport Wellfield. It will evaluate treatment options, distribution system upgrades, and residuals management. Deliverables include a PFAS Roadmap with phased recommendations and staff workshops, with the final report expected about 48 weeks after notice to proceed. At the October 7, 2025 WIS meeting, ADEQ presented funding opportunities for small and disadvantaged water systems to address PFAS. Prescott was identified as a disadvantaged community and may qualify for funding. ADEQ is also exploring whether several small local water systems with elevated PFAS levels could be connected to Prescott's system, and a feasibility study is underway to evaluate potential integration and benefits.

Member Garing commented that one treatment option is powdered activated carbon (PAC) which uses smaller particles and, according to an American Waterworks study, produces less residual waste. A key consideration is disposal, as spent carbon containing PFAS is considered hazardous waste and cannot typically be sent to the landfill. Other technologies, such as micro carbon spheres, were highlighted for their efficiency in treating a wide range of PFAS compounds while generating minimal residual waste.

Member Fruhwirth expressed concern about ADEQ's proposal to connect non-City of Prescott water systems to Prescott's system. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that water sent to these areas is balanced by wastewater recharge, suggesting that sewer system needs for these communities should also be addressed and funded, so that Prescott is not providing service without appropriate return or infrastructure support.

Mr. Ruiz clarified that ADEQ is aware that any service to non-City of Prescott water systems must consider return flow and sewer infrastructure. ADEQ, not the city, is conducting the feasibility studies, and these studies will include evaluation of potential sewer needs in the affected areas.

Mr. Graham provided an overview of PFAS treatment technologies, comparing Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) and Ion Exchange (IX).

- **GAC Pros:** Effective for PFAS removal, widely used, well understood, lower O&M costs than IX, reactivation possible at select facilities.
- **GAC Cons:** Requires significant backwash and flushing, high competition/low selectivity, effectiveness varies with water quality and PFAS speciation, higher capital costs than IX.
- **Ion Exchange Pros:** Easy to implement, high selectivity, effective for PFAS, smaller footprint, lower capital costs due to lack of backwash tank.
- **Ion Exchange Cons:** Resin is more expensive, performance affected by chloride and sulfate, requires forward flushing, higher O&M costs than GAC.

Other technologies such as reverse osmosis and fluoro-sorb were excluded due to impractical waste disposal challenges.

Member Garing added that Ion Exchange creates a large waste stream of very salty water when the resin is regenerated, something to be aware of and look at closely.

***This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.***

E. Presentation & Discussion Regarding an Update on Willow Lake Management Plan and Water Levels at Willow Lake.

Environmental Project Manager Jeremy Cordova provided an update on the Willow Lake Management Plan and reservoir water levels. A brief history of Willow Creek Reservoir was presented. The reservoir was originally constructed between 1912 and 1914, with the Willow Creek Dam built in 1935. Between 1935 and 1965, several stages of a crosscut channel were constructed and modified between Watson and Willow Lakes to allow water transfer. In 1998, the City of Prescott developed an operational plan for Watson and Willow Lakes and purchased the land and water rights from the Chino Valley Irrigation District. Since that time, management of both lakes have been governed by that 1998 master plan. He explained the need for a new, Willow Lake-specific management plan due to the significant differences between Willow and Watson Lakes. Watson Lake is smaller in footprint but deeper and colder, hosts more than 250,000 visitors annually, and supports festivals, events, campgrounds, and high levels of recreation. Willow Lake is broader, shallower, warmer, quieter, and more natural in character, receiving approximately 170,000 visits per year, primarily from residents. The proposed Willow Lake Management Plan is intended to provide coordination and direction among City departments and staff. Primary focus areas were identified: adaptive management of water quality and quantity, vegetation, recreation, and public outreach. Willow Lake is currently about 15 feet below the dam spillway, the lowest level in over 15 years. The decline began when the lake was lowered for an infrastructure project that was delayed due to archaeological discoveries, followed by additional water loss from evaporation. The lake will be allowed to refill naturally, or through transfers from Watson Lake, once archaeological reviews are complete.

Chair Rusing asked if the sewer main extension would be under the lake.

Mr. Cordova responded that his understanding is that the pipe will be near the edge of the lake.

Mr. Cordova further explained that low water levels at Willow Lake have degraded water quality, increased invasive vegetation, and expanded unauthorized trails, creating greater management and habitat protection challenges. However, the low lake level also provides opportunities to assess and improve lake bed conditions, manage vegetation and wildfire fuels, and plan long-term reservoir and recreation enhancements.

Member Fruhwirth asked whether any outside organizations would have concerns or objections to the city examining the lake bed sediment and morphology, or making potential modifications to the lake bottom.

Mr. Cordova responded that the reservoir's rated capacity cannot be increased, but lost capacity may be recovered. Any sediment work would be limited to deposited sediment and would avoid disturbing native background material, which is expected to contain archaeological resources. A consultant has been engaged to study sediment depth, composition, and chemistry to determine feasible removal limits and appropriate disposal or reuse options, as costs vary significantly.

Mr. Ruiz added that certain obligations and notification requirements apply to modifications of the lakes, including coordination with entities such as SRP. At this stage, efforts are limited to studies, and all required parties would be notified if any proposed changes advance to project implementation.

Member Garing asked if there is an environmental document in process for this project.

Mr. Cordova answered that a Willow Creek environmental assessment with Natural Channel Design is moving forward. A proposal has been received and, following procurement guidance, staff will proceed with a contract. The assessment will identify areas of erosion and sediment deposition, evaluate sources of sediment entering the lake, explore methods to reduce sedimentation, and examine opportunities to improve groundwater recharge to help stabilize lake levels. The study will result in a plan with defined strategies and goals, which may lead to future projects to implement those recommendations.

Member Garing questioned if there are downstream water rights holders that the city has to release water for.

Mr. Ruiz explained that operation of water releases from Watson and Willow Lakes is governed by a stipulation and judgment between the former lake owner and SRP, which sets the allowable volume and timing of releases. The city operates within these parameters when releasing water to recharge basins. While the agreement establishes maximum release limits, staff indicated there does not appear to be a minimum release requirement. Upon acquisition of the

lakes, some Chino Valley Irrigation District water rights holders relinquished all rights, while others retained partial rights. The City continues to meet its obligations by providing required water deliveries to remaining rights holders in accordance with the governing agreements.

Mr. Cordova continued with the presentation and reported that progress on the Willow Lake Management Plan includes regular coordination meetings with City staff and outside stakeholders, resulting in improved collaboration among City, County, State, and local partners. Key actions underway include scoping a lake coring and sediment study, receiving a proposal for a Willow Creek functional assessment to improve water delivery and water quality, evaluating potential water quality treatment options similar to those used at Watson and Upper Goldwater Lakes, and developing a remediation plan for the former Prescott Dirt Site. Two funded Public Works programs—Green Stormwater Infrastructure and Healthy Lakes—are in place to implement recommended projects. Next steps include refining plan goals and deliverables, returning to Council for a future study session and individual briefings, coordinating a field visit with Yavapai County Flood Control and ADEQ partners to align water quality data collection, and designing projects to improve groundwater recharge and reduce sedimentation. Staff is also exploring, in coordination with Arizona Game and Fish, the potential use of beavers as a natural and cost-effective tool to improve water quality, habitat, and flood control in the Willow Creek corridor.

***This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.***

**4. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM STAFF**

Mr. Ruiz highlighted the City's Environmental Services team and their creation of the Prescott Water Quality Dashboard. The dashboard, accessible through the *Participate Prescott* link on the City's website, provides the public with updates on water bodies, including color-coded water quality conditions, lake levels, basic lake information, FAQs, and educational videos. It is intended to keep the community informed and engaged with the status of local water resources.

***This item was for discussion only. No formal action was taken.***

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, Chair Rusing adjourned the meeting at 10:48 a.m.

*Cathey Rusing*

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CATHEY RUSING, Chair

ATTEST:

*Torey Dawson*

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Torey Dawson, Deputy City Clerk