25 October 2012

DELIVERED BY HAND

The Honorable Jonathan Rothschild
Mayor, City of Tucson

Dear Mayor Rothschild:

Your neighbors need your help! The Sahuarita/Green Valley communities face a problem that threatens the sustainability of their water supply. The Upper Santa Cruz Providers and Users Group (an association of water providers, major users, and the Town of Sahuarita) has conducted a detailed study of groundwater use and recharge in the local portion of the aquifer, and has determined that there is an annual overdraft of about 40,000 acre-feet. That is, considering the uses of groundwater and the various ways in which it is recharged, each year a net 13 billion gallons of water are removed from the local portion of the aquifer. This situation essentially will persist for years into the future: Changes in land use are projected eventually to reduce the annual overdraft to perhaps 34,000 acre-feet, but this is still an unsustainable level. Already indications of surface subsidence due to the removal of groundwater can be observed in our communities.

This problem will be exacerbated if the proposed Rosemont Mine begins operations. The mine will use about 6,000 acre-feet of water a year, to be drawn from a well field located just outside the Town's boundaries. Similar concerns would apply to any business proposing to use a significant amount of groundwater.

Experts have concluded that substantial mitigation of the overdraft problem will require finding substantial additional sources of water than can be recharged in the local part of the aquifer. Fortunately there is an effort underway that will begin this process. Community Water Company (a local non-profit water utility) and the Green Valley Water Improvement District both have allocations of Central Arizona Project (CAP) water. They have not been able to use these entitlements because the present CAP terminus, at Pima Mine Road just west of I-19, is well north of their service areas. Community Water Company has begun a project to bring water from the current CAP terminus to a recharge facility to be located in its service area. Community Water will use only about 25% of the capacity of the pipeline, thus allowing for the possibilities of additional recharge and future extension of the pipeline farther to the south.

So how can you help? CAP and the City of Tucson jointly own a 24 inch (diameter) pipeline running along Pima Mine Road from the CAP terminus to the existing recharge facility near Pima Mine Road and Nogales Highway. At the Santa Cruz River crossing, this pipeline hangs from a bridge owned by the Town, which has determined that the bridge needs to be replaced. As the bridge is constructed, CAP will replace this pipeline with a 36 inch line, and has entered into an agreement with the Town to help pay for the cost of the bridge. This new CAP line will allow Community Water to obtain CAP water

near Pima Mine Road and Nogales Highway and transport it south to be recharged. Even though Community's pipeline and recharge basins are projected to be completed in early 2014, the connection to the CAP water supply will not happen until the Town can obtain funding and replace the bridge. To avoid such a delay in addressing our local water needs, it is hoped that the City will agree to a temporary connection to the existing CAP/Tucson pipe (of course with appropriate leasing costs). So I am requesting that you help obtain approval for this temporary connection.

There is of course a political complication: The Community Water Company project is being paid for by Augusta Resources, the parent company for Rosemont Copper. Let me offer two observations relevant to this situation. First, this project is going forward independent of decisions about the mine. Note that money is being spent now to put pipe in the ground, to design pumping stations, and to design and obtain permits for recharge basins. Second, the purpose of this pipeline is not to bring water to the mine, but rather to recharge CAP water locally. The recharge basins are to be located in the Town of Sahuarita, miles away from the mine site.

Thank you for your consideration. I will be glad to provide whatever other information you may need.

Sincerely,

Duane Blumberg
Mayor