



Growing food in our community since 1947

## From Farm Land to Houses

How does it happen? Every year thousands of acres of prime number one farm land, producing food and fiber for thousands of people, are buried under cement, asphalt and houses, providing a place to live for thousands more people. Something is wrong with this picture. In Northern Arizona, with its scarce supply of topsoil, very few farms are left, and of those, very few are owned and operated by the same people. Most are owned by speculators waiting to build houses at an opportune time, leasing their land to the people that farm, or hiring farm operators.

At Young's Farm, owned and operated by the same family for over 50 years, we thought we were different. Monetarily speaking we know it only makes sense to subdivide, but we love this farm life, the work we do, and relish the raising of family where plants and animals are nurtured, and prosperity depends on the yearly harvest.

With land prices around us skyrocketing, we never considered the possibility of our land being a poor investment. Yet, now we find the State of Arizona, through the Department of Water Resources, is making this a reality. Every year that houses are **not** built on our farm, we lose four percent of the water we can use for what they call a one hundred year assured water supply. By the year 2025 no water would be available for an Assured Water Supply. In a letter dated August 24, 1999 the director of the Prescott Active Management Area, Phil Foster states:

*The real issue, which has not been correctly presented, has to do with the right of the farms to extinguish their IGFR (Irrigation) water right for a supply of water to develop their farms with. The Assured Water Supply Rules allow the IGFR holders to extinguish their irrigation rights to obtain a supply of water for development using the following formula:*

$$1.5 \text{ acre-feet} \times \text{the Number of Irrigation Acres} \times 2025\text{- year of extinguishment.}$$

*This supply of water, for the farmer to convert his land from irrigated cropland to houses, did not exist in law before the Assured Water Supply Rules were adopted. It was only put in the rule to provide an incentive to the farmer to expedite the conversion of the farm.*

*As you can see from the formula, the amount of water which will be available to the farmer, if he chooses to convert this irrigated cropland to houses, **diminishes** in volume each year.*

We have no immediate desire to see houses covering our family farm. Monetarily speaking, we know it only makes sense to subdivide and because of this formula **the sooner the better**.

**Our question is:** Why does the Department of Water Resources want to expedite the conversion of our farm to houses so much that they impose such a harsh financial penalty on continuing a family farm? We believe the formula should be changed to:

$$1.5 \text{ acre feet} \times \text{the Number of Irrigation Acres} \times 25,$$

thus making the water allocation permanent rather than declining.

To help change this illogical law, please write or call:

Your Legislator: 1700 W. Washington, Phoenix AZ 85007, Phone: 1-800-352-8404

Governor Jane Hull: 1700 W Washington, Phoenix, AZ 85007, Phone: 1-800-253-0883

Rita Pearson, Director of Department of Water Resources: 500 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004, Phone: 1-800-352-8488

In order to compile a file, we would appreciate a copy of any correspondence.