

SRP CONTINUES ITS WATER STEWARDSHIP ROLE

By Drew Vallorano, SRP Corporate Communications

FEBRUARY 7, 2003 MARKED THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

of the Salt River Project (SRP). On that date in 1903, the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association (SRVWUA) articles of incorporation were filed with the Maricopa County Recorder's office. Since that time, SRP has been serving as a steward of the Salt River Valley's valuable water resources.

The genesis of SRP began with Benjamin A. Fowler, a Salt River Valley leader, and George Maxwell, a long-time proponent of federal reclamation and friend to Valley interests. The duo lobbied Congress for the passage of the National Reclamation Act which was viewed as a possible solution to the Valley's water problems. Water was scarce and the supply unreliable in the early 1900s. Championed by President Theodore Roosevelt, the Act became law in June 1902, creating the opportunity for the construction of federal reclamation projects.

It was not a certainty, however, that the Act would first benefit the Salt River Valley in Arizona. In order to improve Arizona's chances of selection, Valley leaders recognized that a formal organization would be needed to contract with the government and eventually operate and maintain the reclamation project.

Fowler chaired the group formed to write the articles of incorporation for the proposed association, but the actual writing was mostly the work of Maxwell and Judge Joseph Kibbey, a U.S. District Court judge and future Territorial Governor. The articles prescribed how the association would be organized and how it would represent the landowners to the government.

When the federal government accepted the SRVWUA's articles of incorporation, it became a model for other reclamation projects and launched the organization that is known today as SRP.

On June 25, 1904, SRVWUA and the federal government signed an agreement to build Roosevelt Dam, with members of the SRVWUA pledging more than 200,000 acres of their land as collateral for the federal construction loan. Construction of the original dam cost about \$3.8 million and was completed in 1911. A major modification in the late 20th century, with a \$430-million price tag, added height and a concrete shell to the dam, allowing for the storage of more floodwater, protecting the downstream Salt River dams, and providing additional storage for Valley cities.



Crews lowered the first stone at Roosevelt Dam on September 20, 1906. This cornerstone sits on the bedrock of the Salt River and established a firm footing for the Salt River Project.

From 1923 to 1946, another five dams were constructed on the Salt and Verde rivers to further ensure an adequate and reliable supply of water was available for the Valley.

Government loans, made possible by the National Reclamation Act of 1902 and the faith of Valley landowners, funded the construction of this network of dams and canals, bringing new prosperity to central Arizona. For the next five decades, homes and businesses developed across the Salt River Valley, making Phoenix the nation's sixth-largest city and enabling growth of several other Valley communities.

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ESTABLISHING MUNICIPAL WATER CONTRACTS

The early 1950s presented challenges for SRP and the City of Phoenix. As new residents came to the Salt River Valley, land was being converted from farms to housing subdivisions. Phoenix needed additional water to provide for the increasing population. As the use of the land changed, new homeowners did not realize they needed to pay association assessments, even though they did not receive irrigation. This also was a time of drought and the Project reservoirs were very low.

To solve both the water shortage problem for the City of Phoenix and the assessment dilemma for the Association, a plan was mapped out that would provide for the delivery of water through the City water distribution system to homeowners whose lands were formerly agricultural. The City would assume responsibility for collecting the assessments and pay SRP for the water.

In July 1951, Phoenix and SRP negotiated a 25-year contract, which would deliver raw water to the city water treatment plants and transmission system commencing on January 1952. SRP would maintain control of the water and its shareholder rights. The “Domestic Water Agreement” laid the foundation for other Valley cities to sign similar contracts and the beginning of cooperation between the SRP and the cities on major water issues.

Today, SRP has domestic water agreements with all the municipalities located within the Association’s water service area. Those cities are Avondale, Chandler, Gilbert, Glendale, Mesa, Peoria, Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tempe, and Tolleson. Urban water use now accounts for approximately 80% of SRP’s total shareholder water deliveries.

On Project Deliveries For Cities 2002

City	SRP Urbanized Acres	Surface Water AF	Groundwater AF	Total Water AF
Avondale	2,762	4,885	1,138	6,023
Chandler	20,215	33,953	3,841	37,794
Gilbert	10,863	16,948	6,823	23,771
Glendale	12,956	21,240	8,444	29,684
Mesa	20,346	43,943	11,569	55,512
Peoria	7,369	5,304	1,570	6,874
Phoenix	73,188	172,065	16,005	188,070
Scottsdale	5,875	5,175	3,681	8,856
Tempe	17,260	51,247	567	51,814
Tolleson	1,980	3,234	-	3,234
Total	172,814	357,994	53,638	411,632

WORKING WITH CITIES TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS

If predictions hold true, the SRVWUA’s service area will be almost entirely urban within the next 20 years.

A water delivery system that was originally constructed to deliver water to agricultural lands spread out over an entire 375-square-mile service area is now delivering most of its water to a few municipal water treatment plants. Working together with the cities, SRP is studying ways to deal with potential water delivery challenges these concentrated delivery points may pose, especially during periods of peak water demand.



While Phoenix may have been the first city to sign a domestic water agreement, other Valley municipalities soon followed. Pictured here is the Tempe City Mayor Harold F. Andrews (right) signing a contract with SRP President Victor Corbell, which enabled Tempe to receive water for domestic use in 1964. Looking on is Tempe City Clerk Loretta Mutte and A. L. Monette, SRP Secretary.

To protect against drought and to further ensure availability of a reliable and adequate supply of water, SRP and local municipalities are developing “water banking” facilities. The planned New River-Agua Fria Underground Storage Project in Glendale will allow currently excess or underutilized surface water supplies and reclaimed water to be stored in natural underground aquifers for future use. A similar recharge facility operating in the East Valley, known as the Granite Reef Underground Storage Project, has “banked” more than 650,000 acre-feet of water, more than nine times the volume of Saguaro Lake, since 1995.

Planning for the future also includes land use around SRP water facilities, specifically the banks of the 131-mile main canal system. SRP is partnering with cities and developers on several canal multiple use (recreational and commercial) projects, while addressing operation and maintenance requirements, public access and safety issues, environmental impacts, and licensing obligations.

“We are proud of SRP’s century of accomplishments,” said John F. Sullivan, Associate General Manager of the SRP Water Group. “Our energies are now focused on meeting the water needs of future generations in the Valley.”