

# Arizona Daily Star®

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## Exploring all water options a necessity

The Pima County Board of Supervisors should approve a joint study with the city of Tucson on the possible use of recycled wastewater among options for maintaining the region's drinking-water supply.

The study — and we want to stress that this is *only* a study pertaining to the region's long-term future — would help prepare the county for possible water shortfalls and assist in planning.

The Star's Erica Meltzer reported Monday that the Tucson City Council has already approved the study. The Board of Supervisors will vote on it today.

We expect our governments to plan for our future, so let's not panic when governments do their job.

Supporters of last year's failed Proposition 200, which would have, among other things, prohibited "toilet-to-tap" water delivery are shouting a universal "I told you so."

Hold on a minute. No one is going to start piping treated effluent to homes in the foreseeable future.

"There's no proposal on the table. The job of planners is to think long term, and thinking long term means getting more use out of our wastewater," Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry said in Monday's Star.

As we said in a Dec. 2 editorial ("Yuck aside, debate needed on toilet-to-tap"): The city and county are being prudent and practical by examining all options that might be available — and that includes use of effluent.

In December, we discussed innovations of Cloudcroft, a Summerhaven-like community near Alamogordo, N.M., which began construction of a processing plant that will purify effluent and blend it with spring water for human consumption. At that time we pointed out that there are really only two impediments to converting effluent to safe drinking water — money and perception, perception being the business of getting over the so-called "yuck" factor.

That yuck-factor packs an emotional wallop. Even though the Tucson region at present has no plans to pump treated effluent through your kitchen spigot, it is nonetheless a worthy discussion.

If the region faces some sort of water crisis in 2020 or 2030, it might be this study that lays the groundwork for dealing with the situation.

Water flowing from our taps is considered safe, but it is not pristine, nor is it an infinite resource. Last week, The Associated Press reported that the nation's drinking-water supply, including that of Tucson, contains myriad pharmaceuticals.

Last month, San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography reported that Lake Mead, which provides water for the Central Arizona Project, could possibly go dry by 2021. The CAP helps replenish Tucson's aquifer.

Tucson and Pima County should not acquiesce to the yuck-factor, but should explore all water options and not discount those that will be technologically possible in the future.

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