

## Mayor's Report on Water Stewardship Pt. 4- Effluent Capture

In the early days of the West, folks paid close attention to the water level in the well, but weren't too concerned about the rate at which waste water was returned to the aquifer. Unfortunately, as the population has grown and population density has increased, those two items have begun to move more and more into the spotlight. Whether we like it or not, we have a definite impact upon the aquifer beneath us, and making some carefully thought out changes in how we do business today will help prevent making hasty decisions in the years ahead.

In sparsely populated areas, septic systems have always been the method of choice for dealing with waste water. They are fairly economical, and most soils do a pretty efficient job of cleaning contaminants out of the effluent as it either evaporates from the soil or slowly works its way down to the aquifer. Sewer systems, on the other hand, are more expensive than a septic system for the average homeowner- but the efficiency of a managed wastewater system is hard to refute. Of the approximately 320,000 gallons of raw waste that the Chino Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant processes per day, roughly 300,000 gallons of class A+ effluent is produced for recharge or other uses. This effluent is in many cases cleaner than the water in many of our lakes and streams.

Although effluent capture and reuse doesn't make good economic sense for rural areas, it makes great ecological sense for more densely populated ones. The real challenge comes when we attempt to get the piping from one area to another. And if the Arizona Department of Water Resources is correct in their prediction of a severe overdraft condition in the next thirty years, we might want to start looking at some possible solutions sooner rather than later.

Chris Marley, Mayor of Chino Valley