



Breakfast Series makes a splash with SRP's Surface Water Resources Manager



If you want to know about the water supply in SRP's reservoirs, Charlie Ester is your expert. If you want to know the forecast for the winter of 2018, well, he will give you an educated guess on that, too.

"Nothing is certain about the weather," Ester, Surface Water Resources Manager at SRP, said at the REIAC Breakfast Series on Infrastructure at the offices of CoStar. "It was pretty certain last winter was going to be dry."

"As it turns out, January 2017 was the sixth snowiest month on record. The Grand Canyon's North Rim received 79 inches of snow and Flagstaff got 43.6 inches. After 20 years of drought, even a normal winter felt great," he said.

The good news: as of May 30, SPR's lakes were 74 percent full.

"We wouldn't be here today if not for a reliable and resilient water supply," Ester said. "A majority of the water is going to customers who are not in agriculture. SRP was formed because we deal with drought. We had visionary leaders trying to save water for farming when Phoenix was a small town, but now we've transitioned to being the fifth largest city in the U.S."

SRP manages several dams and reservoirs on the Salt and Verde rivers, as well as the East Clear Creek, that produce hydroelectricity. This includes six dams and lakes on the watershed: Roosevelt (the largest), Apache, Canyon, Saguaro, Horseshoe, and Bartlett.

"The worst drought in Arizona was from 1898 to 1904, and we've been in dry conditions since 1996," Ester said. "We need to get back in the cycles of the 70s and 80s when it was wet all the time. We have to ensure carry-over storage to manage the worst drought on record."

Giving his review of the 2017 monsoon season, Ester said we were doing pretty good until August. He adds that it's a seasonal change in wind direction that really affects the monsoon. It's important, he said, that we enter the rainy season before winds start to come in from southeast and east.



His 2018 winter forecast? Ester predicts "right at normal."

"Nature's forecast is when you see woodpeckers sharing trees, that's a good sign (of a wet winter)."