population growth
IN ARIZONA

By Marshall A. Worden and David A. de Kok

Downtown Tucson, Arizona's second largest city.

Marshall A. Worden is director of the Office of Economic Development, The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. David A. de Kok is the program director for the Metropolitan Tucson Land Use Study in that office.

Over six million people now live in Arizona. With a population increase of more than 200,000 during the 12 months ending July 2005, Arizona had the fourth greatest gain and fastest rate of growth in the United States during that period, ranking only behind Florida, Texas, and California. Arizona, with the 17th largest population among all the states, has since 2000 surpassed Missouri, Wisconsin, and Maryland in size. The Phoenix metropolitan area gained 83,200 jobs during 2005, an increase greater than all other places in the United States including Washington, D.C. with 81,600 new jobs, Los Angeles with 69,200, New York City with 64,300, and Las Vegas with 59,200. These remarkable growth measures foreshadow equally impressive expectations for the future. This article first examines the recent quickening pace of population growth and looks forward to the probable size of Arizona and its counties in 2030. Following that review, three major issues regarding the accommodation of anticipated growth are discussed: the provision of land, transportation, and water.

POPULATION

The population of Arizona grew from approximately 3.7 million in 1990 to 5.1 million in 2000 and is projected to be 10.3 million in 2030, an increase of 102 percent between 2000 and 2030. Table 1 summarizes Arizona's actual and projected population growth between 1990 and 2030. This snapshot not only illustrates growth over the years but also the unabating acceleration of growth as the number of people added to the state's population increases each decade. During the final decade of this 40-year span, Arizona's population will grow by 2.25 million – an extraordinary figure, if not also a disturbing one. Due to the growth in the state's total population, however, the percentage change for each period falls after the decade of the 1990s, which registered a remarkable 40 percent increase.

Arizona is an urban state that is dominated by the Phoenix metropolitan area (Maricopa County)

TABLE 1

ARIZONA'S ACTUAL AND PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH, 1990-2030

Decade	Population Growth	Percent Change
1990-2000	1,465,404	40
2000-2010	1,506,749	29
2010-2020	1,819,067	27
2020-2030	2,255,949	27

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980-2000; U.S. Census Bureau, Interim State Population Projections, 2005.

THE LIMITATIONS OF LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The allure of a vibrant economy and the sunny deserts of the American Southwest have made Arizona one of the fastest growing states in the nation. This growth is occurring despite limited amounts of private land, a severe shortage of water, and an antiquated and underdeveloped transportation system. A variety of institutional mechanisms and engineering feats has allowed the state to grow while coping with these challenges. Accommodating this continued high rate of growth into the future will require increasingly complex and costly fixes.

and, to a much smaller extent, the Tucson metropolitan area (Pima County). Seventy-six percent of all Arizonans live in these two metropolitan areas. All counties in Arizona (Figure 1), with the exception of Apache and Greenlee Counties, experienced significant population growth between 1990 and 2000. The mostly rural counties (Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, La Paz, Navajo, and Santa Cruz) showed the smallest increases, but even these were in the range of 20 to 30 percent over their population levels in 1990. Mohave and Yavapai Counties registered the greatest percentage increases, with 66 percent and 56 percent respectively. These counties, while not classed as metropolitan, are nevertheless rapidly urbanizing. The driving force behind the 40 percent statewide increase in population over this decade was found in the two metropolitan counties, Maricopa and Pima. Pima County, even with an increase of 178,866 people in the last decade of the 20th century, however, was a distant second to Maricopa County in terms of growth during that same period. Maricopa, on its own, added more than 950,000 people, increasing its population by 45 percent.

Table 2 illustrates the continuation of these trends between 2000 and 2005. Maricopa County added well over half a million residents, Pima County well over 100,000, and growth in Yavapai, Yuma, and Mohave and especially in Pinal County also was impressive. Phoenix metropolitan growth dwarfs everything else in the state. Population growth in Arizona is an urban phenomenon and the Phoenix metro area, as the most highly urbanized region of the state, experienced the greatest population growth during the first half of this decade. It is in fact one of the most rapidly growing urban areas in the entire country.

Figure 1
Arizona Counties, Major Cities, and Native American Reservations

Figure prepared by ESI Corporation of Phoenix, Arizona.

TABLE 2
POPULATION OF ARIZONA'S COUNTIES, 2000-2005

	2000	2005	Growth 2000-2005	Percent Change 2000-2005
Apache	69,423	73,775	4,352	6.3
Cochise	117,755	131,790	14,035	11.9
Coconino	116,320	130,530	14,210	12.2
Gila	51,335	54,445	3,110	6.1
Graham	33,489	35,455	1,966	5.9
Greenlee	8,547	8,350	-197	-2.3
La Paz	19,715	21,190	1,475	7.5
Maricopa	3,072,149	3,648,545	576,396	18.8
Mohave	155,032	188,035	33,003	21.3
Navajo	97,470	109,985	12,515	12.8
Pima	843,746	957,635	113,889	13.5
Pinal	179,727	246,660	66,933	37.2
Santa Cruz	38,381	44,055	5,674	14.8
Yavapai	167,517	205,105	37,588	22.4
Yuma	160,026	189,480	29,454	18.4
Arizona	**5,130,632**	**6,044,985**	**914,353**	**17.8**

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980-2000; and Arizona Department of Economic Security, Population Statistics Unit, 2006.

Table 3 shows how robust growth in the Phoenix metro area has been and is projected to be. The table compares the six largest counties in Arizona for the contribution each makes to the state's overall population. The counties are Maricopa and Pima, the proxies for the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas, and the major non-metropolitan, but rapidly urbanizing, counties of Pinal, Yavapai, Yuma, and Mohave. Maricopa County accounted for 60 percent of Arizona's residents in 2000 and is projected to remain at 60 percent in 2030. Over the same years, Pima County's share is expected to shrink (while of course still growing in absolute

terms), declining from 16 percent in 2000 to a projected 14 percent in 2030. Pinal County, in contrast, is projected to increase from a share of four percent in 2000 to eight percent in 2030. The population shares of Yavapai, Yuma, and Mohave Counties show a more or less stable pattern.

As unbalanced as these data are, however, they understate the dominance of the Phoenix metro area. There are two reasons for this, both having to do with Pinal County. First, much of the projected growth in Pinal County will take place in the northern part of the county that abuts Maricopa County. Many people buying houses in this area are commuters who drive to jobs in the Phoenix metro area. Although these new developments lie in Pinal County, they are part of the metropolis. Second, because this area has started to develop seriously only in the last five years, the population projections in Table 3 for Pinal County are understated.[1]

TABLE 3

LARGEST COUNTIES' SHARE OF ARIZONA'S POPULATION, 2000-2030

County	Percent Share of State (Population) 2000	2030
Maricopa	59.9 (3,072,149)	60.0 (6,207,980)
Pima	16.4 (843,746)	13.9 (1,442,420)
Pinal	3.5 (179,727)	8.2 (852,463)
Yavapai	3.3 (167,517)	3.4 (355,462)
Mohave	3.0 (155,032)	3.2 (330,581)
Yuma	3.1 (160,026)	3.0 (316,158)

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2000; Arizona Department of Economic Security, Population Statistics Unit, 2006.

Cheaper land will lure large numbers of metropolitan workers out to this peripheral area where they can buy more house for their money. The projections in Table 3, to repeat, show Maricopa County with a 60 percent share of the state's population in 2030. Taking account of growth in northern Pinal County over the next quarter century, it may be more accurate to say that 68 percent of all Arizonans will be living in the Phoenix metro area by 2030.

Pinal County's southern reaches, which abut the Tucson metro area, also are poised for rapid urbanization. By the middle of this century, if not earlier, it is likely that there will be continuous urban development from north and west of Phoenix to south and east of Tucson – an urbanized linear swath of 250 miles.

What are the sources of this exceptional growth? About one-third of Arizona's population growth is due to *net natural increase* – the extent to which births exceed deaths. The other two-thirds of population growth is attributed to *net migration* – the extent to which incoming population exceeds the outgoing population. Historically, the Midwest was the greatest source of in-migrants to Arizona, but California is rapidly gaining on the Heartland. The Midwest provided 191,000 in-migrants between 1995 and 2000, and California supplied 186,151. The other leading states behind California were Illinois (47,597), Texas (44,739), Washington (38,112), and New York (31,258). Undocumented migrants are a population that has not been successfully enumerated, but the Pew Hispanic Center puts that population at about a half million in Arizona, or about one-twelfth of all residents.

The reasons people choose to move to Arizona are, of course, many and varied, but three factors are most important. Since World War II, Arizona generally has had unemployment rates below the national average: new residents typically have more easily found jobs in Arizona than elsewhere. The relatively low cost of living in Arizona also has been a draw to the state. This factor is behind much of the recently increased in-migration from California. Arizona's climate has long been a major attraction for people with health problems in other parts of the country and for retirees with the means to choose their retirement homes.

Three long-term and persistent challenges stand out to this enormous population growth in Arizona: the availability of land and water and the adequacy of the transportation system.

LAND FOR THE FUTURE

New York Times columnist David Brooks has dramatically described the growth that is taking place on the western edge of the Phoenix metropolis:

> The flow of people moving into cities is but a trickle compared with the torrent moving out to exurbia. . . When you study this torrent, you realize it is actually several torrents running in the same direction. It's active seniors looking for communities tailored to their needs. It's young singles looking for townhouses (there are more single-person households in suburbia now than two-parent families). It's rich people looking for a country club and poor people looking for affordable housing. Most of all, it's immigrants who are skipping gateway cities and buying homes twice as quickly as earlier immigrant groups.[2]

David Brooks' description of these new waves of growth is a reminder that land is the indispensable prerequisite for accommodating long-term population growth in Arizona. While many observers

imagine Arizona as large and empty, the state has an intricate pattern of land ownership that adds significant complexity to the problem of making land available for development. Forty-two percent of the land base (Table 4) is managed by various federal agencies, mainly the U.S. Forest Service (Department of Agriculture) and the Bureau of Land Management (Department of the Interior). Twenty federally recognized Indian tribes own another 28 percent of the land. Thirteen percent is owned and managed by the state, leaving just 18 percent in private hands.

Arizona has the second lowest percentage of land in private ownership in the United States; only Nevada has less. Whereas no state east of the Rockies has more than 13 percent federal lands, none of the continental states west of Texas has less than 25 percent federal lands. Nevada's 82.9 percent federal ownership far outstrips Arizona's federal lands, but Arizona's high percentage of reservation and state lands reduces its private ownership to nearly that of Nevada. Arizona has the greatest extent of Indian reservations in the United States. Arizona also has one of the highest percentages of state land ownership in the country.

Private land is at a premium in Arizona, especially land located at the edges of cities where it is most needed for development. Maricopa County has both the greatest need for private land and the greatest absolute amount of private land in the state – 2,767 square miles. While there is no immediate land constraint, even this huge land expanse is likely to be challenged by future growth, particularly if growth remains at relatively low density and highly land-consumptive. Ninety-three percent of the county's residents already reside in incorporated places that contain two-thirds or 1,838 square miles of all private land in the county.

Portion of the 336-mile long Central Arizona Project aqueduct as seen at Picacho Peak in Pinal County.

Private land has until recently been the only land usually available for urban development, but Arizona State Trust Land[3] is more and more available through auctions and land swaps. Of the 14.5 million acres of state land, 9.2 acres are Arizona State Trust Land. These lands are managed by the

TABLE 4

LAND OWNERSHIP BY COUNTY, 2003
(square miles)

	Total	Private	Percent Private	Federal	Percent Federal	State	Percent State	Tribal	Percent Tribal
Apache	11,219	1,458	13	1,234	11	1,012	9	7,515	67
Cochise	6,181	2,486	40	1,553	25	2,142	35	-	-
Coconino	18,556	2,423	13	7,270	39	1,780	10	7,083	38
Gila	4,791	192	4	2,635	55	48	1	1,916	40
Graham	4,681	465	10	1,766	38	777	17	1,673	36
Greenlee	1,831	147	8	1,414	77	270	15	-	-
La Paz	4,515	226	5	3,523	78	405	9	361	8
Maricopa	9,420	2,767	29	5,164	55	1,028	11	461	5
Mohave	13,446	2,292	17	9,301	69	909	7	944	7
Navajo	9,929	1,791	18	895	9	578	6	6,665	67
Pima	9,983	1,745	17	2,847	29	1,350	14	4,041	44
Pinal	5,327	1,343	25	1,021	19	1,889	35	1,074	20
Santa Cruz	1,231	469	38	667	54	95	8	-	-
Yavapai	8,152	2,031	25	4,143	51	1,978	24	-	-
Yuma	5,544	608	11	4,639	84	297	5	-	-
Arizona	**114,806**	**20,443**	**18**	**48,072**	**42**	**14,558**	**13**	**31,733**	**27**

Sources: Arizona State Parks, Arizona Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan, 2003; and The University of Arizona, Arizona Statistical Abstract—2003.

Arizona State Land Department to the highest and best use in order to maximize revenues for the beneficiaries, with the K-12 schools being the primary recipients of the earnings.

Unlike other states, Arizona has retained most of its original Trust Land and, instead of selling, has leased the land, much of which historically was usable only for livestock grazing. Now, however, and fortunately for the beneficiaries, many hundred thousand acres of grazing land have become urban land on the expanding edges of the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas. Consequently, even if the lack of private land constrained growth, the abundance of State Trust Land provides the necessary land resource for the long term. Unfortunately, the state constitution and the federal enabling legislation provide no flexibility to manage the Trust Lands for non-monetary growth management, conservation or open space purposes.

While developable land is necessary to sustain Arizona's expanding low-density urban form, conservation and protection of the natural and historical landscape is essential to sustain Arizona's quality of life. During recent years in Pima County, for example, approximately ten square miles of raw land annually are converted to development. In response to that phenomena as well as a 1997 conflict between an endangered species listing and economic development, Pima County adopted in 2001 the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). This plan is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious conservation and urban planning efforts in the United States. SDCP covers a multi-million acre region, seeks to enhance and protect the natural and cultural environment, and combines bio- and urban planning.

Voters approved a $174.3 million bond program in 2004 for the purchase of open space, the hallmark of which is the creation of large working landscape reserves in contrast to small and isolated species-specific refuges found in other states. Past and recent acquisitions have resulted in reserves of 77,000 acres, with $120 million in bonding authority remaining. The future shape and form of the Tucson metropolis is being defined by the SDCP.

TRANSPORTATION

Explosive population growth has put intense pressure on Arizona's transportation system. A basic and important fact about Arizona is that it is a large state, tremendously rural in area, but overwhelmingly urban in population. Improvements to the state transportation system have not kept pace with either urban or rural growth. Freeway construction in the metropolitan areas has followed growth and, consequently, land use planning in the urban areas particularly has not been thoughtfully coordinated with highway infrastructure and transit needs. Arizona is not yet adequately planning for the transportation systems required to meet the population and spatial growth that is projected for the next 25 years. Current plans essentially address growth that has already occurred.

There are two major fixed-route bus transit systems in Arizona: Valley Metro in the Phoenix area and Sun Tran in Tucson. While ridership has shown strong growth in recent years, average daily ridership in both metro areas is relatively modest given the size of the populations. Sun Tran ridership did increase 6.5 percent during 2004 while transit ridership declined nationally.

Theodore Roosevelt Dam and Lake is located on the Salt River in central Arizona.

Both metro areas have considered light rail transit alternatives during the last decade. The Valley Metro light-rail system is currently under construction in Phoenix, funded as part of a transportation plan adopted in a voter-approved November 2004 ballot (Proposition 400). The initial segment will be 20 miles long and will begin operation at the end of 2008. Also approved as part of the proposition were about 30 miles of extensions to the initial segment.

The Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) is the major source of funding for the construction and improvement of the state's highways and bridges. The HURF serves as the central collection point for state taxes and fees related to the operation of motor vehicles. These taxes and fees are: gasoline taxes, currently 18 cents per gallon; vehicle license taxes, based on the value of the vehicle being taxed; use fuel taxes, a tax on diesel fuel that varies from 18 cents per gallon for passenger cars to 26 cents per

gallon for commercial trucks and buses; and motor carrier fees. Unfortunately, of these sources for the HURF, only one, the vehicle license tax, is indexed to the rate of inflation, and that rate has been reduced in recent years. Repeated efforts to increase the gasoline tax – a flat tax subject to the negative effects of inflation and increasing fuel efficiency – have during the last decade been rebuffed by the state legislature. The HURF remains severely underfunded to meet the construction and maintenance needs of the state's highways.

Several metropolitan areas in Arizona have voter-approved Regional Area Road Fund (RARF) programs that meet the needs for transportation improvements through sales taxes. Maricopa, Yavapai, and Pinal Counties have RARFs and the Flagstaff metropolitan area also is raising funds for specific transportation projects through local taxes,

One local source of transportation funding in Arizona is particularly noteworthy. Maricopa County voters in 1985 approved a one-half cent transportation excise tax for the construction of controlled-access highways. This resulted in the near doubling of the freeway system in that county and the addition of nearly 1,000 new lane-miles. Maricopa County voters in 2004 similarly approved the extension of this tax for another 20 years, which will raise approximately $9 billion, allow for the expansion of the freeway system by another 50 percent, and add well over 1,000 new lane-miles. Under the voter-approved plan, 56 percent of the tax revenue is allocated to freeways; public transit receives about one-third, to be split almost equally between bus and light rail; and nine percent for streets. The remainder is dedicated to safety planning, bike paths, and walkways.

Residents of Pima County in May 2006 approved a 20-year Regional Transportation Authority Expenditure Plan, based on a one-half cent transportation sales tax. The $2.1 billion plan allocates 58 percent to roadway improvements (200 new lane-miles), 27 percent for transit improvements, nine percent for safety improvements, and six percent for environmental and economic vitality. Even with the infusion of these new monies, the percentage of vehicle miles driven in the region under the conditions of either severe or heavy congestion will double in the 2000 to 2025 period, increasing from 27 percent to 54 percent.

WATER

Water availability and water management decisions have strongly controlled Arizona's settlement and development patterns. The historic settlement pattern reflected locations determined by direct access to surface water streams, but the ability to mine, store, and transport water over long distances has dramatically changed development patterns. As a result, current population centers also are located where water is relatively plentiful, but the sources of that water are quite different than those that determined the early settlement pattern. There are four sources of water in Arizona: Colorado River water, other surface water, groundwater, and effluent. Separate rules and definitions are used to manage each source, resulting in considerable complexity to the water rights systems in Arizona.

Colorado River water is available to users adjacent to the river and to Central Arizona Project (CAP) contractors who transport the water to more distant locations such as the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas. About 39 percent of Arizona's water comes from the Colorado River and the CAP delivers about half of that to central Arizona. The Phoenix metro region also is served by surface water from the Salt, Verde, and Agua Fria Rivers (Figure 2). Approximately 19 percent of the water in Arizona comes from surface water other than the Colorado River.

Forty percent of the water used in Arizona comes from groundwater. Groundwater is the sole source of water for much of rural Arizona but, while relatively plentiful, it is often located at great depths in large alluvial basins. The Colorado Plateau to the north as well as the southeastern part of the state are both dependent solely on groundwater. Arizona, starting in 1945, adopted several groundwater management regulations, but only the 1980 Groundwater Management Act (GMA) established meaningful regulation of groundwater. The GMA created the Arizona Department of Water Resources and centered groundwater management activity in

Figure 2

Figure prepared by ESI Corporation of Phoenix, Arizona.

Arizona Major Streams and Rivers

Figure 3

Figure prepared by ESI Corporation of Phoenix, Arizona.

Arizona Active Management Areas and the Central Arizona Project

what are now five Active Management Areas (AMAs): Phoenix, Pinal, Tucson, Prescott, and Santa Cruz (Figure 3).

The GMA established water management goals for each of the AMAs so as to limit the overdraft of groundwater. A new water rights system stopped the development of new irrigated agricultural land, set up a well-measuring and reporting system, and mandated a conservation program.

The water issues facing the state are daunting, despite significant improvement in water management over the last 25 years. The most important changes came with implementation of the GMA, which put in place a long-term water-planning strategy for the state that focused on long-term water supply. For example, one major policy innovation, the Assured Water Supply (AWS) program, is the nation's most far-sighted regulatory program connecting water supply and municipal demand. This program requires that all new subdivisions in the AMAs demonstrated, prior to subdivision approval, that a 100-year water supply of adequate quality is available. No other state requires a 100-year renewable water supply prior to development.

The AWS program has defined a strategy for the municipal sector in the AMAs to move away from groundwater to renewable water supplies. The AWS rules require the use of renewable supplies and expect that municipal and industrial demand will continue to grow while the demand of other sectors, *e.g.* agriculture, will diminish over time.

The Central Arizona Project (CAP) is the backbone of Arizona's renewable water supply system and is critical to achieving a sustainable water supply for the central portions of the state. The CAP is able to bring 1.5 million acre-feet of Arizona's 2.8-million acre-foot Colorado River allocation into central and southern Arizona. The CAP aqueduct, built at a cost of $4 billion, is 336 miles long, includes 15 pumping stations that lift water from the Colorado River to its terminus south of Tucson, and has the capacity to annually deliver a total of 1.8 million acre-feet of water. The CAP service area is limited to Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties. It is operated by the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, which has taxing authority and a board elected by the citizens within its three-county service area.

The CAP system, along with its storage, flood control, and delivery components, is an essential investment in water supply sustainability for the state. It provides a renewable supply to replace dependence on mined groundwater and, at the same time, reduces groundwater overdraft and provides water supplies during periods of drought.

The use of renewable water supplies from the Colorado River as an alternative to dependence on mined groundwater has required the development of new institutions as well as major financial investments. For example, soon after the adoption of the GMA it became clear that recharge would be a major component of storing and utilizing renewable water supplies. In 1986, the Underground Water Storage and Recovery Program was adopted to allow individual entities with surplus supplies to store their water underground and then recover it later for use. This program has been very successful and, as of 2005, had resulted in the development of 76 storage facilities, primarily in the AMAs, and storage of over four million acre-feet of water in the state.

Another innovation is the Arizona Water Banking Authority (AWBA), which was established in 1996 to store excess Colorado River water, to ensure reliable municipal water deliveries during future shortages on the Colorado River and CAP system failures, and to support other water management objectives as well as interstate water banking. Annual water use is strongly affected by agricultural demand and the availability of other surface water supplies within the state. The AWBA, in combination with incentive pricing programs to encourage short-term use of CAP water for agriculture and underground storage, has enabled the full use of Arizona's allocation.

Neither the availability of land nor the character and performance of the transportation system are significant growth constraints when compared to the availability of water. Demand for CAP water is projected to exceed available supply by 90 percent

by mid-century. The thirsty Phoenix and especially Tucson metropolitan areas will find it extraordinarily expensive as well as legally and politically difficult to acquire additional water, including water from other parts of the state. Some parts of the state, confronted with severely limited water supplies, may need to sacrifice environmental quality in favor of population growth or engage in unsustainable groundwater depletion or limit growth.

CONCLUSION

Despite its limited water supply, constrained land availability, and underdeveloped transportation system, Arizona has successfully managed to become one of the fastest growing states in the country. Although population growth shows no signs of slowing, the solutions to land, water, and transportation limitations will come with increasingly higher price tags. These higher costs may erase one of Arizona's chief draws – its relatively low cost of living. However, a vibrant economy and unparalleled climate should continue to attract those seeking a better quality of life.

ENDNOTES

1 In 1997 the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) projected Pinal County's 2030 population to be 255,700. In 2006 DES estimated Pinal County's 2005 population to be 246,600—a figure approaching their earlier projection for 2030. In 2006, DES also issued a new 2030 population projection of 852,463 for Pinal County, an increase of 246 percent over the 1997 projection.

2 David Brooks, A Boom on the Fringes, *The Arizona Republic*, 2006.

3 When Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, which called for the survey and sale of lands west of the Appalachian Mountains, one section of land (one square mile or 640 acres) out of each 36 square mile township was reserved for the benefit of common schools. Over the next few decades as the survey and sale of lands moved westward, the amount of reserved school land was doubled and consisted of sections 16 and 36 in each township. The Arizona State Enabling Act of 1910, which allowed the Territory of Arizona to prepare for statehood, allocated two additional sections, 2 and 32, for the benefit of common schools. An additional two million acres were allocated for the benefit of The University of Arizona, the state's land grant institution of higher education, and other state entities.


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