Last November, the citizens of Lake Havasu City faced a difficult decision. Nitrate threatened their groundwater. ADEQ politely put them on notice. Although their drinking water was still clean – at least where tested – four monitoring wells found increasing nitrate levels, threatening the watershed and the lake itself. Something had to be done to fix the problem before the state imposed potential solutions on the community.

Earlier in the year, Havasu citizens had spoken out against a small diameter sewer system introduced by engineering consultant Burns & McDonnell. Resident’s felt there wasn’t enough evidence this kind of system would work in a community their size. After all, Lake Havasu City is the largest city in the nation on septic tanks.

The City was faced with expanding its conventional sewer system to include all residences to meet ADEQ requirements. A bond election to authorize debt was called to fund the design and construction of the system and add a third treatment plant to reclaim water. Because many citizens were confused about the need for sewers in general (small diameter or conventional), some voters were opposed from the start. Others felt they were being duped after being told, when they bought their homes, septic tanks were all they needed. Also, the price tag attached to this system was estimated at $463 million.

It was up to the ADEQ team to do something about getting the citizens to understand their issues. Esther Mcknicky’s words were a key to solving the problem. "We can show you why we need sewers, and how to protect the environment". 

ADEQ politely put them on notice. Although their drinking water was still clean, ADEQ advised the city of their next steps. They informed them that if they did not hook up to the sewer system, they would still be responsible for the cost of the system.

As this goes to press, the City is looking at starting construction on the first new sewer line in November. John Gall is now running for Mayor, hoping to recapture this kind of teamwork to win that election.

*REALTOR is a registered trademark of the National Association of REALTORS.