

Kim Mitchell Senior Policy Advisor, Healthy Rivers



Kim Mitchell is the senior policy advisor at Western Resource Advocates (WRA). With a focus on Arizona, Mitchell's work revolves around three key areas: influencing Colorado River governance and ensuring climate-centric concerns are considered during the renegotiation process; collaborating with residents and leaders on groundwater challenges to provide education on management tools available and potential future solutions; and working with tribal communities to help them advance water management priorities and amplify their voice among decision makers.

An Arizona native, Mitchell has long been fascinated by water. Her youth was peppered with camping excursions, rafting outings, and road trips around the West, which inspired an interest in environmental stewardship.

So, it's no surprise that Mitchell's early career was focused on water. She worked as a hydrologist at the Arizona Department of Water Resources for two decades, working in a variety of disciplines including basin-wide groundwater studies, aquifer recharge, and instream flow protection. It was this time, when Mitchell was privileged to see so many Arizona environmental jewels, that she developed a deeper interest in fragile river ecosystems and the impacts that arise from the presence – or absence – of water.

Mitchell later served as the executive director of the Arizona Water Banking Authority (AWBA) where she was responsible for all contracts and intergovernmental agreements for storing sufficient water to firm municipal and industrial supplies, to assist in Indian water rights settlements, and to fulfill interstate obligations with Nevada. It was here Mitchell successfully built consensus among the water community, and elected officials, to pass legislation that pushed AWBA up the priority list for obtaining water to ensure the group would be able to meet its obligations.

Most recently, she worked as a consultant to the Central Arizona Project on water planning and management projects. Mitchell then joined WRA in 2018, keen to be a part of the team that was using science-based solutions to protect both the environment and local economies.

With an eye toward advancing practical solutions that will protect the West's natural resources for generations to come, Mitchell sets about solving problems and bringing stakeholders together. Her knack for doing so helped to shape a 2021 law that altered a long-time water tenet that obliged water right holders to "use it or lose it." Users can now work with regulators to enact water reduction campaigns without risking forfeiture of their water rights. Her work was also instrumental in the *Arizona Capitol Times* naming Water for Arizona (a coalition of WRA) as a Leader of the Year in Environment in 2020.

Mitchell has also channeled her passion for the environment into her life outside the office. In addition to serving as both a Cub Scout and Girl Scout leader, Mitchell volunteered at the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station, where college students conduct research in marine and terrestrial habitats.

She's part of the Governor's Water Council, serving on the Rural Groundwater Subcommittee, and is a former board member of the Arizona Hydrological Society. Mitchell earned a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Science from Purdue University.

She lives in Arizona with her husband and their pet retriever. Their two children are grown, one working as a speech pathologist and another as a mechanical engineer. In her free time, Mitchell enjoys hiking, camping, and fishing, along with traveling and scuba diving. She also has a garden where she cultivates spicy peppers.

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