

**GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT/  
RECYCLED WATER  
(Community Resources and Infrastructure)**

In January 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. proclaimed a drought State of Emergency in California, after water shortfalls had led to the driest year in recorded State history. The governor directed administration officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for these drought conditions. The Legislature took action as well, drafting several major proposals designed to globally manage the State's groundwater supply and permanently secure groundwater sustainability for citizens, communities, the agriculture industry, and other stakeholders.

The resulting State proposals to groundwater management have been one-size-fits-all models that treat groundwater like air is treated in AB 32—that it is all commingled and should be collected in one “bucket” to be more easily managed. This means that every landowner or industry member with a water well and pump must install measuring devices and report quarterly to the State, as well as submit a yearly report of total groundwater extraction. In this manner, the State will know the exact groundwater inventory and can prescribe measures, including rationing, fees, and fines to enforce sustainability guidelines. But groundwater management is much different than air management. A depleted water basin in one area rarely affects other nearby healthy basins. Mandating measurement devices and groundwater reports for all citizens and businesses, regardless of the status of their water basins, is an unnecessary cost burden - as is the mandate for all local jurisdictions to create and maintain a groundwater management/sustainability agency that has inspection, research and administrative capabilities.

The State groundwater proposals put forth were designed for State-designated “high priority” areas that have experienced severe groundwater depletion and land subsidence. Napa County is classified by the State as a “medium priority” area. Napa County has proactively instituted a number of groundwater sustainability measures over the past 10 years. Napa County believes that State measures should concentrate first on high priority areas. Medium priority areas should be required to have a State-mandated groundwater management plan in place that includes measuring, rationing and enforcement. But the plan would only go into effect if the medium priority area's groundwater management policies fail to protect groundwater supplies and causes the area to become a high priority area.

Further, Napa County agrees with the State that accurate groundwater monitoring is necessary to determine existing supplies and properly inform policy and planning. But when public agencies collect groundwater data of private wells, the information can be obtained by the public. Private well owners have become wary of volunteering their wells for study because the data may adversely affect their property values. State legislation is needed to protect private well owners, but allow the public to view the data in aggregate and not by individual wells.

Recycled water has become a major part of agricultural counties' solution to meet the future water demands of its citizens, particularly those who live in water-deficient areas.

Recycled water, which is treated wastewater that can be used for irrigation, manufacturing and other non-drinking purposes, can significantly reduce counties' dependence on groundwater and potable water. Timely federal and State funding for recycled water projects is crucial, as areas such as Napa County's Milliken-Sarco-Tulocay (MST) groundwater basin area continue to suffer steep drop-offs in ground- water levels that will take longer and longer to replenish – with the possibility of complete failure of aquifers - if no alternative water source becomes available in the near future. Napa Sanitation District is increasing efforts in the area of reuse through the County's relationship with the North Bay Water Reuse Authority (NBWRA). As the State continues to face challenges regarding water supply, water reuse will become increasingly important.

**ACTION:**

1. Support State legislative proposals that include a two- or multi-tiered approach to groundwater management and sustainability that requires high priority areas to meet State guidelines for measuring, rationing, and enforcement, but allows medium and lower priority areas to develop their own local groundwater management and sustainability policies. Medium and lower priority areas will be required to submit groundwater management plans to the State that would only go into effect if the local measures fail to protect groundwater supplies and cause the area to become a high priority area.
2. Support State legislative proposals that protect the privacy of private well owners concerning water data, but allow the public to view the data in aggregate and not by individual wells.
3. Support federal and State legislative proposals that encourage and fund recycled water projects in agricultural areas.
4. Support legislative and administrative actions which will benefit the NBWRA in its mission to create a water supply that can reliably supplement ever more scarce water supplies, reuse water; create a reliable irrigation supply for parks, public landscaping and vineyards; restore wetlands, and improve stream flows for riparian habitat and fisheries recovery.
5. Support legislation that provides funding, loans, and grants for the monitoring of privately-owned wells, where property owners voluntarily agree to participate in the County's groundwater monitoring program. Seek legislation that would ensure the privacy of any individual data collected, but authorize aggregated data to be released, if requested.