

Glossary

Acre-Feet (AF) – A unit used to define a volume of water. One acre-foot of water is equal to the amount of water that would cover one acre of land, one foot in depth.

Aquifer – An aquifer is any soil or rock formation that is saturated with water and can supply an acceptable quantity and quality of groundwater to wells or springs.

Artificial Recharge – The addition of surface water to a groundwater basin by human activity. Also see groundwater recharge.

California Department of Public Health – The State agency charged with regulating public water systems.

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) – State law that requires state, local, and other agencies to evaluate the environmental implications of their actions.

Confined Aquifer - A confined aquifer has a barrier both above and below. These barriers are called confining layers. Confining layers are made up of geologic materials that greatly slow or restrict the movement of groundwater (such as clay or silt).

Conjunctive Use – Also called groundwater storage and recovery is the coordinated management of surface water and groundwater supplies to maximize the sustainable yield of the overall water resource. When surface water is used instead of groundwater in wet years, the aquifer is recharged by rainfall and decreased pumping. In dry years or during drought conditions when less surface water is available, groundwater is pumped from the expanded underground storage.

Constructed Wetland – Engineered systems that are designed to approximate natural wetlands and include aquatic plants species used to treat storm water runoff or wastewater effluent.

Drinking Water Well – A well used to extract water from an aquifer that will be used as drinking water.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) – A report required by the California Environmental Quality Act to describe the environmental impact of a proposed project.

EIR Certification – EIR adoption by a governing agency that involves acceptance of the document as being complete and adequate according to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Groundwater – Water that occurs and moves below the land surface. Some groundwater resides in aquifers.

Groundwater Basin – An interconnected groundwater flow system that includes surface and all subsurface permeable materials within a defined boundary.

Groundwater Recharge – The action of increasing groundwater storage by natural processes (e.g., rainfall, streamflow) or by human activity.

Groundwater Storage and Recovery – See Conjunctive Use

Hydrogeology – The scientific study of the distribution and movement of groundwater in soil and rock formations.

Imported Water – Water that originates from one hydrologic region and has been transferred to another hydrologic region.

Infrastructure – Physical structures that form the foundation for development. Infrastructure includes: groundwater wells, water pipelines, electric power, communications, transit and transportation facilities, and oil and gas pipelines and associated facilities.

MG – Million gallons **MGD** – Million gallons per day

Master Plan – A comprehensive plan to guide the long-term physical development of a particular area.

Potable water – Water that is safe for drinking.

Pump Station – Facilities that include pumps and other equipment required to pump water.

Recovery Well – A well used during dry years or drought conditions to pump (recover) groundwater previously stored in wet years.

Recycled Water – The California Water Code defines recycled water as "water which, as a result of treatment of waste, is suitable for a direct beneficial use or a controlled use that would not otherwise occur."

Saturated Zone – The portion of subsurface soil or rock where every available pore space (void) is filled with water. Aquifers are located in this zone.

Stormwater – Surface water flow that has originated from rainfall and runoff.

Sustainable Yield – The amount of water that can be extracted from a groundwater basin that does not produce negligible results such as overdraft and subsidence; also known as safe yield.

Unconfined Aquifer - An unconfined aquifer is directly beneath the unsaturated zone with no barriers in between. The water table is the top surface of an unconfined aquifer. Unconfined aquifers have a bottom barrier layer that slows the groundwater movement and allows it to build up in the aquifer.

Unsaturated Zone – The portion of subsurface soil or rock between the land surface and the water table where pore spaces (voids) are not fully saturated with water. Also referred to as the vadose zone.

Watershed – An area of land that serves as a catchment for all of the surface and groundwater within it; also known as a drainage basin.

Water Blending – The mixing of water supply originating from multiple sources and done in a manner to meet water quality objectives.

Water Table – That surface in a groundwater aquifer at which the water pressure is equal to atmospheric pressure. It is defined by the levels at which water stands in wells that penetrate the aquifer just far enough to hold standing water.

Westside Basin – The Westside Basin is a groundwater aquifer system that extends from Golden Gate Park in San Francisco southward toward San Bruno. The system is an important municipal and irrigation water supply for the communities and businesses that overlie the Basin.