



Groundwater Management Policy
Adopted by NCWA's Board of Directors
June 20, 2001

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) represents seventy agricultural water districts and agencies, private water companies, and individual water rights holders with senior rights and entitlements to the surface waters of the Sacramento Valley. NCWA's members also have overlying and appropriative water rights to groundwater resources in Northern California, from the Northern reaches of Tehama County to Sacramento County, from the edge of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in El Dorado County to Glenn County which extends to the Coast range.

NCWA believes the preservation of Northern California's groundwater resources is critical to its "Integrated Water Management and Water Supply Development Program" and the long-term viability of the region's economic prosperity and environmental well-being. While Northern California's groundwater resources may be abundant enough to meet some of California's short-term water supply needs, these resources alone cannot meet the state's long-term needs. New water storage projects are essential to creating the water supplies necessary to meet California's burgeoning social, economic and environmental water supply needs. Although groundwater issues are complex and views about its use are often based upon incomplete information, it is widely acknowledged that the proper management of these resources can benefit the economic needs of local communities and the environment NCWA has developed the following groundwater policy in recognition of the importance of groundwater resources to the region, and to the long-term preservation of these resources.

NCWA encourages its members to protect underlying groundwater resources, basins and aquifers through the development and implementation of an appropriate groundwater management plan, such as an AB 3030 groundwater management plan (California Water Code 10750), or by monitoring and assessing existing or new well activity. The compilation of baseline information, and monitoring, of groundwater characteristics is essential for the responsible management of these resources. This information may also be developed empirically through carefully managed and locally controlled demonstration projects.

NCWA encourages its members to coordinate and integrate, to the extent possible, their local (sub-basin) groundwater management plans and programs (including efforts to work

with those areas which do not have an authorized means to manage groundwater) as part of a basin-wide program to achieve local water supply reliability and water quality protection.

NCWA encourages water agencies and companies to work cooperatively with local cities and counties, recognizing that counties and cities have an important responsibility to protect their citizen's health, safety and welfare. It is equally important that counties and cities encourage and foster prudent groundwater management practices by water agencies and companies to assure that the overall economy and environment is protected and that counties and cities do not limit any authorized means of managing groundwater resources and do not regulate the use of groundwater unless the safe yield is exceeded.

To assist in efforts to better understand and manage groundwater resources, NCWA encourages its members to pursue funding opportunities under AB 303 (the Local Groundwater Management Assistance Act, Water Code section 10795), Proposition 13 (Water Code section 79000 et seq.), the Integrated Storage Investigations (ISI) and the Sacramento Valley Water Management Agreement.

NCWA encourages its members to identify and protect natural and artificial groundwater basin and recharge areas and processes - particularly, agricultural practices and the creation of seasonal wetlands for waterfowl that serve to replenish groundwater aquifers. Recharge of groundwater basins is an important element in groundwater management programs.

NCWA encourages its members to develop conjunctive management programs, where it is feasible, in order to responsibly manage, and maximize, surface and groundwater resources for the benefit of the local economy and environment. Conjunctive management is best defined as the integrated management of groundwater and surface water to increase water supplies, during selected times, above that which would otherwise be available if the two resources are managed independently. A properly managed conjunctive management program will be instrumental to the safe and sustainable long-term yield of a groundwater basin.

NCWA believes that a conjunctive management program that is part of a water transfer program should be coordinated with all relevant local water transfer and groundwater policies, where appropriate. Water transfers based upon groundwater substitution should not be utilized in areas with long-term water deficiencies, or where unavoidable and significant economic or environmental impacts will occur as a result of the water transfer.

Every effort must be made during emergency conditions, such as drought periods, to avoid local impacts.

To assure that groundwater can best be managed at the local level, NCWA will strongly oppose any effort by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) or any other state or federal agency to expand its jurisdiction over groundwater resources in California.