



**GROUNDWATER PROTECTION IN THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY  
WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM  
February 12, 2003**

The Sacramento Valley Water Management Program (Program)<sup>1</sup> contains important provisions to preserve and protect Northern California's water rights and its groundwater resources. The preservation of Northern California's groundwater resources is critical to the long-term viability of the region's economic prosperity and environmental well-being. Accordingly, groundwater management has been a central part of our integrated water management program. The Program addresses groundwater management and the protection of groundwater in detail.

**Protects Northern California Water Rights**

The Phase 8 Bay-Delta water rights proceedings were dismissed on January 31, 2003. As a result, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) remain obligated under State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) order to continue to meet the Delta water quality standards. As a result, Northern California water users can fully exercise their water rights, including all their rights to groundwater. This benefits and protects every water user in Northern California upstream of the Bay-Delta—even those not directly participating in the Program.

**Groundwater Planning**

To implement the Program, work plans have been developed that describe certain Sacramento Valley projects and the water management benefits that can be realized by implementing these projects. Thirteen projects are specifically designed for groundwater planning. Many of these projects have either received or will seek funding under AB 303, the "Local Groundwater Management Assistance Act of 2000." All of these projects are locally sponsored and developed to ensure local control and success. These programs include a range of groundwater monitoring, data collection, evaluation and analysis, pilot projects and capital improvements. Northern California interests that have received funding so far under AB 303 include: Butte County Department of Water Resources and Conservation, Glenn County, Lassen County, Redding Area Water Council, Sacramento Groundwater Authority, Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District, Tehama County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Sacramento Valley Water Management Agreement is available at [www.norcalwater.org](http://www.norcalwater.org). The Groundwater Management Policy adopted by the NCWA Board of Directors on June 20, 2001 is also available on this website.

## **Locally Developed Water Management Programs**

Groundwater management and the conjunctive management of groundwater and surface water resources is an important part of integrated water management in the Sacramento Valley. To implement the Program, Northern California water districts and companies have proposed more than twenty water management projects as part of the short-term work plans. This includes several conjunctive management projects spread throughout the Sacramento Valley. These projects are designed to increase water supplies above that which would be available if the groundwater and surface supplies are managed independently. These projects will provide water for local use and will help provide water quality control plan relief for DWR and the BOR as part of our efforts to produce a more meaningful solution to the Phase 8 water rights proceedings and to curtail other regulatory and legal challenges to Northern California water rights.

A technical team of leading hydrologists and engineers that represent Northern California agricultural interests is developing these work plans. In all cases, a local water agency or company in the Sacramento Valley have proposed these projects. Unlike many past efforts, these projects will be managed and controlled by local interests without interference from DWR or the BOR. These projects will all be managed to maintain and foster the safe and sustainable long-term yield of the groundwater basins. To assure that this occurs, every work plan proposal includes significant monitoring and study to determine the effectiveness of the project and to assure that the project will not cause adverse impacts to the local area.

## **Surface Storage as Part of the Integrated Program**

To fully protect and preserve groundwater resources, new surface storage will be essential to meet local needs and the burgeoning social, economic and environmental water supply needs throughout the state. For this reason, the proposed Sites reservoir and raising Shasta Dam are part of the integrated water management program for the Sacramento Valley. The operation of these facilities in conjunction with groundwater will ultimately provide the operational flexibility to more effectively meet local needs and protect water rights and maximize supplies for Northern California.

## **Collaboration with Local Interests**

As part of this process, Northern California water agencies and companies have been working cooperatively with local cities and counties, recognizing that cities and counties have an important responsibility to protect their citizen's health, safety and welfare. There have also been significant discussions with numerous farmers and agricultural interests in Northern California. Continuing collaboration will be an integral part of the Program and other related programs.