

Water Facts

State of California
The Resources Agency
**Department of
Water Resources**



Adjudicated Groundwater Basins in California

The State of California is not authorized by the California State Water Code to manage groundwater. California landowners have a correlative right to extract as much groundwater as they can put to beneficial use. In some basins, that correlative right has been defined by a court. In other basins, the correlative right has not yet been defined. Groundwater management programs have usually been developed on an ad hoc basis in response to local initiative through local agencies, adjudication, and districts formed by special legislation. Two additional methods have recently become available: 1) AB 3030 (Water Code Section 10750 et seq) allows certain existing local agencies to manage groundwater; and 2) city and county ordinances. This Water Facts explains groundwater management by adjudication. For information about other types of groundwater management, please consult other Water Facts.

Water Facts are short reports on water resources issues of general interest. They are published periodically by the California Department of Water Resources and can be obtained free by contacting DWR Bulletins & Reports, P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, CA 94236-0001; 916/653-1097.

In some groundwater basins in California, the land owners or other parties turn to the courts to settle disputes over how much groundwater can rightfully be extracted by each land owner. The courts study the available data to arrive at an equitable distribution of the groundwater that is available each year. This court-directed process can be lengthy and costly, although some of these cases have been resolved with a court-approved negotiated settlement, called a stipulated judgment. Unlike overlying and non-overlying rights to groundwater, such decisions guarantee each party to the decision a proportionate share of the groundwater that is available each year.

In these **adjudicated groundwater basins** (see pages two and three), the court appoints Watermasters to oversee the court judgment. In 14 of these basins the court judgment limits the amount of groundwater that can be extracted by all parties to the judgment. The basin boundaries are also defined by the court and generally do not include an entire basin as defined in DWR Bulletins 118 and 118-80. Water users in Santa Margarita River watershed are required to report the amount of surface water and groundwater they use, but groundwater extraction is not restricted. Puente Narrows is an addendum to the Main San Gabriel adjudication that requires a minimum underflow from Puente Basin to Main San Gabriel Basin of 588 acre feet per year.

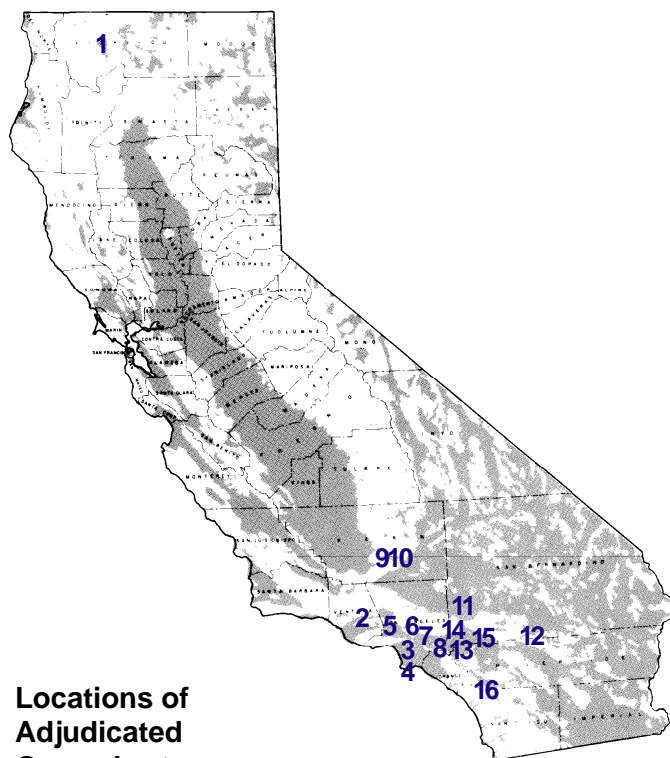
(continued on page 4)

Adjudicated Groundwater Basins and Watermasters in California

Court Name	Filed in court	Final Decision	Watermaster
1—Scott River Stream System	1970	1980	2 local irrigation districts
2—Santa Paula Basin	1991	1996	3-person Technical Advisory Committee from United Water CD, City of Ventura, and Santa Paula Basin Pumpers Association
3—Central Basin	1962	1965	DWR—Southern District
4—West Coast Basin	1946	1961	DWR—Southern District
5—Upper Los Angeles River Area	1955	1979	An individual hydrologist appointed by Superior Court
6—Raymond Basin	1937	1944	Raymond Basin Management Board
7—Main San Gabriel Basin	1968	1973	9-Member Board elected from water purveyors and water districts
Puente Narrows, <i>Addendum to Main San Gabriel Basin decision</i>	1972	1972	2 consulting engineers
8—Puente	1985	1985	3 consultants
9—Cummings Basin	1972	1972	Tehachapi-Cummings County Water District
10—Tehachapi Basin	1973	1973	Tehachapi-Cummings County Water District
11—Mojave Water Agency	1990	1996	Mojave Water Agency
12—Warren Valley Basin	1976	1977	Hi-Desert Water District
13—Chino Basin	1978	1978	5 people, Chino Basin Municipal Water District
14—Cucamonga Basin			Not yet appointed, operated as part of Chino Basin
15—San Bernardino Basin Area	1963	1969	One representative each from Western Municipal Water District of Riverside & San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District
16—Santa Margarita River Watershed	1951	1966	U.S. District Court appointee

Relationship to DWR Bulletin 118-80	
Basin Name; County	No.
Scott River Valley; Siskiyou	1-5
Sub-basin of Santa Clara River, Ventura County	4-4
Northeast part of Coastal Plain of Los Angeles County Basin; Los Angeles	4-11
Southwest part of Coastal Plain of Los Angeles County Basin; Los Angeles	4-11
San Fernando Valley Basin(entire watershed); Los Angeles	4-12
Northwest part of San Gabriel Valley Basin; Los Angeles	4-13
San Gabriel Valley Basin, excluding Raymond Basin; Los Angeles	4-13
San Gabriel Valley Basin, excluding Raymond Basin; Los Angeles	4-13
Cummings Valley Basin; Kern	5-2
Tehachapi Valley West Basin and Tehachapi Valley East Basin; Kern	5-28, 6-45
Lower, Middle & Upper Mojave River Valley Basins; San Bernardino	6-40, 6-41, 6-42
Part of Warren Valley Basin; San Bernardino	7-12
Northwest part of Upper Santa Ana Valley Basin; San Bernardino and Riverside	8-2
North central part of Upper Santa Ana Valley Basin; San Bernardino	8-2
Northeast part of Upper Santa Ana Basin; San Bernardino and Riverside	8-2
The entire Santa Margarita River watershed, including three groundwater basins: Santa Margarita Valley, Temecula Valley and Cahuilla ¹ Valley Basins; San Diego and Riverside.	9-4, 9-5, 9-6

This table (pages two and three) lists the court's name for the adjudicated portion of the groundwater basin first, followed by the Watermaster and the basin name and number used in DWR's Bulletins 118 and 118-80.



Locations of Adjudicated Groundwater Basins in California.

The numbers on this map indicate the locations of adjudicated groundwater basins in California. They correspond to the numbers by the court name for the adjudicated basins listed in the first column on page two.

¹In Bulletin 118-80, Cahuilla Valley (9-6) is spelled differently.

For most basins, the court has defined a fixed value for the safe yield. Extraction may exceed this value during some years as a part of the operating range that is allowed in the judgment. Adjudicated groundwater basins in California, their appointed Watermasters, the year the cases were filed, and the year the decision became final are shown in the table on pages two and three. The court's name for the adjudicated portion of the basin is listed first, followed by the basin name used in DWR Bulletins 118 and 118-80.

Although adjudication of groundwater basins has resulted in a reduction of the amount of groundwater that is extracted, the total amount of water consumed has continued to increase. As a result, agencies in most adjudicated basins have imported surface water or are looking for water to import to meet the increased demand.

The original court decisions provided Watermasters with the authority to regulate extraction of the **quantity** of groundwater; however, they omitted authority to regulate extraction to protect water **quality** or to prevent the spread of contaminants in the groundwater. Because water quantity and water

quality are inseparable, Watermasters are recognizing that they must also manage for quality. The Watermaster for Main San Gabriel Basin returned to the court in 1990 asking for authority to limit extractions to help prevent the spread of contaminants and to expedite remediation. The court granted that authority and in 1991 approved Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster's regulations for implementing such authority. Similar water quality authority was granted to the Upper Los Angeles River Area Watermaster in 1993.

Adjudication of a groundwater basin is one method of regulating groundwater extraction and allocating costs of replenishment. The Legislature has created ten groundwater management agencies that can pass ordinances to regulate groundwater extraction and has authorized some groundwater replenishment fees in 22 other types of water agencies. This authority is discussed in the California State Water Code. A detailed discussion of groundwater management agencies is contained in *Water Facts, Number 4, Groundwater Management Districts or Agencies in California*.

Where do you get more information?

For further information on groundwater management in California, contact any one of the following California Department of Water Resources' offices:

Northern District
2440 Main Street
Red Bluff, CA 96080

916/529-7323

Southern District
770 Fairmont Avenue
P.O. Box 29068 (91209-9068)
Glendale, CA 91203-1035

818/543-4600

Central District
3251 "S" Street
Sacramento, CA 95816-7017

916/322-7164

Division of Local Assistance
1020—9th Street
P.O. Box 942836 (94236-0001)
Sacramento, CA 95814

916/327-8861

San Joaquin District
3374 E. Shields Avenue
Fresno, CA 93726

209/445-5481