

**August 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting**  
**California Water Commission**  
**Issue Working Session**

**Definitions of Groundwater Storage and Conjunctive Use – Redline Reflects SAC Member Recommended Changes**

**Objectives**

1. Get tentative approval from Commission members to use the proposed working definitions.

**Issue Summary**

In most contexts, the definitions of “groundwater storage projects” and “conjunctive use projects” have significant overlap. However, in the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014, these projects were clearly listed as different project types (79751(b) and 79751(c)). Further, per Water Code §79756 (a), the cost sharing formula can be different for conjunctive use and reservoir reoperation projects than for the other project types. The exception in Water Code §79756 (a) gives the Commission discretion to award more than 50% of the total project cost for conjunctive use and reservoir reoperation projects. For the purposes of identifying the project type for funding under the WSIP distinct definitions of groundwater storage projects and conjunctive use projects are required.

Staff recommend using a broad definition for conjunctive use projects.

**Conjunctive use projects** – Projects that allow for the coordinated and planned management of both surface water and groundwater resources in order to maximize the efficient use of both resources. Water supplies, regardless of whether the source of water is surface water, recycled water, or groundwater, are stored in the groundwater basin through ~~intentional~~ recharge for use later. Conjunctive use projects would include projects in which a water management agency(ies) manage their water supplies in a coordinated manner in order to optimize their portfolio of water supplies.

Staff recommends using a narrow and clearly distinct definition of groundwater storage projects.

**Groundwater storage projects** – Projects that capture and infiltrate into a groundwater basin, by natural or artificial means, surface water supplies - including but not limited to floodwaters, stormwater, and recycled water – for later use and/or to avoid or address undesirable results such as chronic lowering of groundwater levels or reduction of groundwater storage, land subsidence, or depletions of interconnected surface water. Projects may also include those that bank water for ~~the project sponsor(s) and/or for~~ external customers in an aquifer for later withdrawal and use outside

of the groundwater basin boundaries or the boundaries of the project sponsor(s) service area. Such projects shall include contractual arrangements with the external customers that detail the water supply accounting and withdrawal obligations and conditions.

For reference, previous definitions of groundwater storage projects considered include:

- Same as conjunctive use projects

Not recommended by staff as the legislature clearly saw them as different project types and provided an exception that conjunctive use projects could potentially receive a higher cost share.

- Projects that only store water in a groundwater basin without plans for extraction for beneficial uses. Such projects would reduce and reverse groundwater overdraft.

Not recommended by staff. This definition seemed to narrow and projects of this type would have difficulty achieving other statutory requirements, including provision of public benefits and ecosystem improvements to the Delta or tributaries.

- Projects that store and extract groundwater in areas without a surface water supply.

Not recommended by staff.