

September 16th Meeting

California Water Commission

Issue Working Session – Definitions of Groundwater Storage and Conjunctive Use

Objective

Get tentative approval from Commission members to use one option of 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.

The following revisions to the definition of groundwater storage projects were provided to Commission staff after the August Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting:

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.

Further revisions to the definition of groundwater storage projects were received following the September SAC meeting. Those revisions are reflected in the definitions presented in Table 1.

Staff feels there is significant overlap between the current definition of conjunctive use projects and the SAC-revised definition of groundwater storage projects. Staff feels a greater distinction is needed between the definitions and offer the following options in Table 1 for consideration.

Questions

1. Is there general understanding and agreement that distinct definitions are required?
2. How should the distinction be made (see options in Table 1)?

Table 1. Options for defining conjunctive use projects and groundwater storage projects

	Internal vs External Distinction (Original Staff Proposal)	Water Supply Goal vs Basin-Specific Goal (Modified SAC Groundwater Proposal)	Existing Facilities vs New Facilities (New Conjunctive Use Proposal and SAC Groundwater Proposal)
Conjunctive Use Projects	Projects that include the coordinated and planned management of both surface water and groundwater resources in order to maximize the efficient use of both resources. 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. Water supplies, regardless of whether the source of water is surface water, recycled water, or in-lieu recharge, are stored in the groundwater basin for later use.	Same definition as internal vs external	To be considered for a maximum project cost share exception, per Water Code Section 79756(a), conjunctive use projects shall include the coordinated and planned management of existing surface water reservoirs and groundwater resources in order to maximize the efficient use of both resources. Conjunctive use projects may include development of new operational agreements and construction of appurtenant infrastructure. These projects shall utilize existing facilities and resources to the maximum extent practicable.
Groundwater Storage Projects	Projects that bank water 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.	Engineered projects that capture, infiltrate, inject, or recharge water into a groundwater basin with the specific goal of avoiding, reversing, or addressing adverse effects or trends such as chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater storage, land subsidence, depletion of interconnected surface water, or water quality degradation.	Engineered projects that capture, infiltrate, inject or recharge water supplies, including but not limited to floodwaters, stormwater, contract water, and recycled water, into a groundwater basin for later use and/or to avoid or address undesirable results such as chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of groundwater storage, land subsidence, depletion of interconnected surface water, and water quality degradation.