

# GOVERNMENT

## Southern California Water Scarcity Affecting Growth?

In February, Metropolitan Water Board (MWB) in Southern California adopted a region-wide plan for sharing water during shortages that will guide the equitable distribution of water among its 26 member public agencies. The plan considers member agencies' dependency on MWD water and alternative sources of supply, and assesses "penalty rates" that increase as agencies exceed their allocations. Previously, MWB had determined allocation solely on "preferential rights" which were based on an agency's financial contribution.

Recent court-ordered reductions of water deliveries from the Sacramento Delta and ongoing drought were important factors in MWB cutting

supplies to its local water districts by up to 30 percent in early January, said the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*.

In response to the new plan, one of the affected member agencies, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD), placed new retail and community developments in western Riverside County on hold in January, saying it could not yet guarantee water for a warehouse proposed for Moreno Valley and a \$300 million hotel and retail complex in Murrieta, according to the *Press-Enterprise*. Seven other developments were already on hold because their water supply could not be assured.

A 2001 bill passed by the California legislature requires major developments to get "will-serve" letters from their water providers before they can proceed with construction, assuring a

supply for 20 years. The delays of new developments are considered the first time the law has had such an effect.

"It's a new paradigm," said EMWD Board Member Randy Record. "It's not water saying 'we're here for you,' but 'You have to do this for us,'" reported the *Press-Enterprise*.

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## New Mexico Senate Considers Regulation of Deep Aquifers

Just as developers are realizing the potential of using deep, brackish groundwater—currently unregulated—to support growth in New Mexico (see *Southwest Hydrology*, March/April 2008), legislators began thinking that regulation of that resource is warranted. Senator Carlos Cisneros of Questa introduced SB 262 to the New Mexico legislature earlier this year, calling for regulation of aquifers having "reasonably ascertainable boundaries" with upper surface 2,500 feet or more below the ground and dissolved solids concentrations greater than 1,000 parts per million.

Deep groundwater produced during oil and gas exploration or geothermal projects is already regulated through the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), although SB 262 proposed additional restrictions.

The bill did not pass, having faced opposition by EMNRD and the State Land Office, according to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. However Cisneros told the newspaper that he plans to evaluate the opposing arguments and return with a new version of the bill in 2009. Supporters said that significant amounts of groundwater pumping at any depth should be monitored by the state engineer. For now, the developers are getting busy...

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## HydroFacts

Term most widely used internationally for recharging, storing, and recovering water from an aquifer:

Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR)

Number of wells in Chennai, India (formerly Madras, pop. 7.5 million) used to recharge rainfall from mandatory rooftop harvesting systems:  
Density of wells in Chennai:

400,000  
15/hectare, or 6/acre

Source: Steve Gorelich, Stanford University

Estimated capacity of recharge facilities, by recharge methodology, in cubic meters:

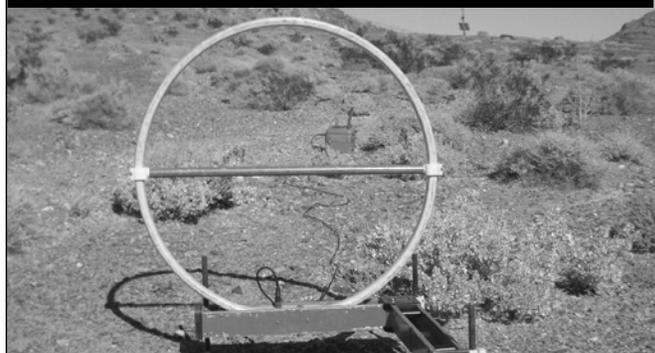
vadose zone wells (per well)	1,000 - 3,000
recharge & recovery wells (per well)	2,000 - 6,000
recharge basins (per hectare per day)	1,000 - 20,000

Estimated life cycle for recharge facilities, by recharge methodology, in years:

vadose zone wells	5-20
recharge & recovery wells	25-50
recharge basins	> 100

Source: *Prospects for Managed Underground Storage of Recoverable Water*, NRC 2008

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