



Media Release

Over 1 million acre-feet of water authorized for groundwater recharge since December

Nine out of 10 permits issued for projects in Central Valley

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SACRAMENTO – Seizing the opportunity from an extremely wet winter and spring to boost groundwater levels, the State Water Resources Control Board since late December 2022 has authorized the diversion of 1.2 million acre-feet of water – more than enough to fill the Folsom Reservoir – for underground storage, wildlife refuges and other purposes.

"Planning for future dry conditions is critical to protecting our communities, health, and our environment," said California Secretary for Environmental Protection Yana Garcia. "The state has taken unprecedented action to leverage the benefits of our recent wet weather by replenishing our groundwater resources through recharge, and we look forward to achieving even more progress in the future with partners across the state. This is just one example of how our state is creating a more resilient water supply for all Californians in the face of climate-driven weather extremes."

The board issued nine [180-day permits this season](#) – all but one for recharge projects in the Central Valley – and in January granted its [first five-year permit](#) to the Omochumne-Hartnell Water District, enabling the district to divert 2,444 acre-feet from the Cosumnes River in Sacramento County. The newer five-year temporary permits require more review than seasonal permits but ultimately allow local agencies greater certainty and flexibility to implement their groundwater storage programs.

"This is the most water we have made available for groundwater recharge in such a short amount of time," said E. Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the State Water Board. "It speaks to how efficient our temporary permitting process has become since the state first prioritized capturing stormwater underground. However, the pace of extreme weather events challenges all of us to accelerate our recharge efforts. Now is the time for applicants to plan for next winter so we can take full advantage of wet seasons to boost our drought resilience and help our groundwater basins recover."

In coordination with the board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Water Resources also [provided technical assistance](#) to help several



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applicants complete their forms and expedite recharge actions, consistent with the Administration's [Water Supply Strategy](#) for adapting to a hotter, drier future.

Aside from accelerated temporary permitting, the scale of authorized recharge this season came about in part due to a request by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to temporarily change its San Joaquin River water rights at Friant Dam. The board [approved the request](#) in March, authorizing the agency to divert over 600,000 acre-feet to manage flood flows.

"We are grateful for Reclamation's coordination with us to take advantage of higher-than-average snowpack to replenish California's depleted aquifers," added Esquivel.

The amount of water diverted under the permits will be known after reporting by permittees later this fall. The volume of permitted underground storage projects does not include additional recharge facilitated by the Governor's recent [Executive Orders](#), which so far has resulted in the diversion of an estimated 90,000 acre-feet of additional water from flooding surface waters to underground aquifers.

While standard, or permanent, water right permits can take several years to process, temporary permits were developed to allow for short-term diversions on a seasonal basis. All permits are subject to environmental review and a public notice period. Currently, the board issues 180-day permits within four months, while five-year permits take approximately a year.

Besides simplifying the permitting process and lowering fees for applicants, the board's Division of Financial Assistance has provided a total of \$1.2 billion in support to 34 projects that will bring a total of 115,000 acre-feet per year to the state's groundwater supplies. Six of these projects are already complete and adding 55,000 acre-feet per year, or enough to supply 165,000 households annually.

The State Water Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation for present and future generations.