

**SOUTH FORK KINGS  
GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY  
GROUNDWATER RECHARGE POLICY**

**1.0 Background**

The South Fork Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SFK GSA) understands the importance of enhancing existing groundwater supply through the use of managed aquifer recharge, also known as water banking. Aquifer recharge is a key management action listed in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This Groundwater Recharge Policy is intended to promote the development of recharge projects to benefit groundwater users and uses. Managed groundwater recharge is consistent with SFK GSA's groundwater sustainability goals.

For the purpose of this policy, groundwater recharge is defined as the purposeful recharge of water to aquifers for subsequent recovery or for environmental benefit. Recharge can occur either using surface or underground recharge methods. The intent of the policy is to make stored water available for use in dry years when surface water supplies are limited.

This Groundwater Recharge Policy will establish a framework to generate groundwater credits (credits) for water users in the SFK GSA. However, all developed credits shall be subject to the Groundwater Extraction Allocation Policy currently under development. Policies governing credits may include but are not limited to avoidance of undesirable results, quantification, transfer, and leave-behind quantity. Policy documents may be updated, amended or terminated by the SFK GSA Board of Directors.

**2.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this Groundwater Recharge Policy is to establish general guidelines for banking surface within SFK GSA boundaries. Specifically, this Policy outlines measures SFK GSA may implement for its oversight of any water banking activities within its boundaries.

**3.0 Authority**

As a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) properly organized pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (Water Code §§ 10720 et seq.) ("SGMA"), SFK GSA is authorized to adopt rules, regulations, ordinances, and resolutions for purposes of fulfilling its obligations as a GSA (Water Code § 10725.2(b), and SFK GSA adopts this Policy pursuant to this authority.

**4.0 Landowner Groundwater Recharge Credits**

Interested participants must hold an interest in real property or lease holding within SFK GSA geographic boundaries, follow the conditions listed below, have an existing SFK GSA account in good standing, and be in compliance with other SFK policies to receive groundwater credit:

1. The surface water must be applied directly into a specific groundwater recharge facility that meets SFK requirements. SFK will provide the landowners with confirms the acreage and location of the facility and that it meets all the requirements of this policy.
2. All cost of establishing and construction of the dedicated groundwater recharge facility are the responsibility of the landowner.
3. All surface water diverted to the landowner is required to be metered or use another standard measuring method approved by SFK.
4. Surface water diverted into dedicated recharge facilities will be credited to the landowner at 90% of the surface water diverted. The remaining 10% credit will remain with SFK for the benefit of all landowners.
5. Groundwater credits will only be generated for the aquifer that the recharge is occurring.
6. The groundwater credits issued to landowners can be carried over to subsequent years for a maximum of 5 years. The groundwater recharge credits can be transferred to other landowners within SFK based upon the requirements of the forthcoming Groundwater Extraction Allocations Policy.
7. These provisions will also apply for recharge on open ground that will not be farmed in that year but that has not been designated as a groundwater recharge facility. Those deliveries will be eligible for 75% credit of the measured water applied.
8. These provisions will also apply to surface water applied to land currently in agricultural production, commonly referred to as Flood-MAR. Those deliveries will be eligible for 75% credit of the measured water applied. Recharge is not permitted on any agricultural land where pesticide or fertilizer application has occurred in the prior 30 days or in the period prohibited by applicable law, whichever is longer. In addition, the land must comply with requirements of CV-Salts Program.

## **5.0 Groundwater Recharge Facilities**

Appropriate information must be provided by the facility owner to quantify the volume of water being recharged in percolation ponds/basins. Water account and project specific information provided by the water user shall remain confidential. The amount of groundwater credit received will be allocated based on the supporting documentation and subject to staff's review. All recharge facilities must be approved by SFK to receive credit. The following checklist is required for approval:

- Land selected for this activity must be favorable for passive recharge.
- A geotechnical investigation report stamped by a professional geologist or engineer must be provided to SFK for review and approval.
- Installation of a dedicated water meter or another standard measuring method to measure the amount of water delivered to the recharge project.

- The facility needs to be isolated from the landowner's irrigation system or have separate meters for any discharge.
- Documentation of source of water, place of diversion and amount of diversion

## **6.0 Over-Application of Floodwater**

During an uncontrolled flood event, SFK will provide credit to landowners that have floodwaters on parcels above irrigation demand (as measured by ET). Appropriate information must be provided by the Landowner to quantify the volume of water being recharged on fields. The amount of groundwater credit received will be allocated based on the supporting documentation and subject to SFK review.

DRAFT

## Definitions

The Policy defines terms based on the Department of Water Resources Water Basics Glossary.

**Flood-managed aquifer recharge (Flood-MAR)** — An integrated and voluntary resource management strategy that uses floodwater resulting from, or in anticipation of, rainfall or snowmelt for managed aquifer recharge on agricultural lands; working landscapes; and managed natural landscapes, including but not limited to refuges, floodplains, and flood bypasses.

**groundwater recharge facility** — A structure that serves to conduct surface water into the ground for the purpose of replenishing groundwater. The facility may consist of dug or constructed spreading basins, pits, ditches, furrows, streambed modifications, or injection wells.

**groundwater** — Water that occurs beneath the land surface and fills the pore spaces of the alluvium, soil, or rock formation in which it is situated. It excludes soil moisture, which refers to water held by capillary action in the upper unsaturated zones of soil or rock. Groundwater classified as underflow of a surface water system, a “subterranean stream flowing through a known and definite channel,” is subject to statutory permitting processes. However, most groundwater in California is presumed to be “percolating water” (i.e., water in underground basins and groundwater that has escaped from streams and is not subject to a permitting process). See also “subterranean stream.”

**groundwater banks** — Consist of water that is “banked” during wet or above-normal water years. The water to be banked is provided by the entity that will receive the water in times of need. Although transfers or exchanges may be needed to get the water to the bank and from the bank to the water user, groundwater banks are not transfers in the typical sense. The water user stores water for future use; this is not a sale or lease of water rights. It is typical for fees to apply to the use of groundwater banks.

**surface water** — As defined under the California Surface Water Treatment Rule, California Code of Regulations Title 22, Section 64651.83, surface water means “all water open to the atmosphere and subject to surface runoff” and hence would include all lakes, rivers, streams, and other water bodies. Surface water includes all groundwater sources that are deemed to be under the influence of surface water (i.e., springs, shallow wells, wells close to rivers, etc.), which must comply with the same level of treatment as surface water.