



Media Release

State Water Board Updates Policy to Encourage Recycled Water Use as Resource to Address Effects of Climate Change

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Board voted today to update its policy for recycled water, a move that promises to streamline the process for recycled water projects in the years to come.

The newly amended [Policy for Water Quality Control for Recycled Water](#) (Recycled Water Policy) sets statewide goals for recycled water use and makes good on the State Water Board's pledge to encourage the development of underutilized water resources to address the effects of climate change, drought and water supply uncertainty.

Recycled water is considered water that, as a result of treatment, is suitable for a beneficial use or a controlled use such as groundwater replenishment or irrigation, that would otherwise not occur.

The updated Policy sets statewide goals for increasing recycled water by encouraging its use in areas where wastewater is currently discharged to saline water bodies and in areas where groundwater supplies are threatened.

In crafting the updated Policy, an [expert advisory panel](#) was convened to develop recommendations for constituents of emerging concern (CECs) – essentially, a broad range of chemicals that are typically not well-monitored and are not regulated from a water quality perspective. CECs include chemicals in personal care products; pharmaceuticals; industrial, agricultural and household chemicals; hormones; and others. The Panel used a conservative approach to evaluate the potential for CECs to be present in recycled water and recommended monitoring for CECs in potable recycled water. In their report, the Panel stated that they “cannot stress strongly enough that the outcome of the 2018 application of the risk-based framework clearly points to the safety of potable and non-potable reuse practices in California.”

“This policy sets out how to issue a permit for a recycled water project while protecting public health and the environment,” said Laura McLellan, a senior environmental scientist in the Division of Water Quality. “It provides confidence in the safety of recycled water by including the panel's recommendations for monitoring and making sure permits are issued consistently statewide.”



The state's Recycled Water Policy dates to 2009 and was first amended in 2013 to provide direction on monitoring requirements for CECs in recycled water used to recharge groundwater. In the past five years, there have been significant developments in the research and regulation of recycled water, including reservoir augmentation (placing recycled water in a reservoir used as a source of drinking water).

This policy does not address [direct potable reuse of recycled water](#). The State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water is working with scientific experts on establishing regulations that would allow recycled water to be used for raw water augmentation, where recycled water is placed into a system of pipelines or aqueducts that deliver water to a drinking water treatment plant. The deadline for those regulations is [2023](#).

Prior to drafting a final version of the updated Policy, there were two periods for [public comment](#) and numerous public meetings to receive input on proposed updates to the Policy.

For more [details about the Policy, click here](#).

Key Details

- Policy for Water Quality Control for Recycled Water was first drafted in 2009 and amended in 2013
- Recycled water is water that is deemed suitable for a beneficial use after treatment
- An expert advisory panel made recommendations for monitoring constituents of emerging concern that were incorporated into the Policy
- One element of the Policy is to set statewide goals to maximize recycled water use where groundwater supplies are in overdraft and where water wastewater would otherwise be discharged to the ocean.

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