



# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Community and Economic Development  
Department of Planning and Building

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 5, 2014

TO: Madera County Planning Commission

FROM: Norman L. Allinder, Planning Director

RE: Defining Groundwater Balance

On May 19, 2014 the Board of Supervisors gave direction to the Planning Department to continue to monitor the current updates of the Groundwater Management Plan, Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, and the formation of a Joint Powers Authority. The Board of Supervisors directed staff to work through the Planning Commission on formulating a clear policy and definition of a water balance for consideration by the Board for adoption.

On July 21, 2014 the Board of Supervisors approved the Gunner Ranch West project. This memo will attempt to summarize the projects requirements related to providing for a 1:1 water balance.

The Gunner Ranch West project must submit a Groundwater Plan accounting for a 1:1 Groundwater Balance within 24 months of the certification of the Environmental Impact Report and clearance of any litigation. The term Groundwater Balance was defined as follows:

*"the annual **Water Extraction** from the Local Aquifer for use within the Gunner Ranch Plan Area (the "Project Area") for all development does not exceed the Project's annual **Water Input** to the Local Aquifer, as measured on a five-year rolling average basis."*

Water Extraction is defined as follows:

*"The water extracted from the Local Aquifer for use on the Project Site for any purpose whatsoever, including but not limited to residential, commercial, or agricultural uses."*

Water Input is defined as follows:

*"fully permitted (1) direct recharge of water onsite, including permitted recharge of effluent from the Waste Water Treatment Plant serving the Project; (2) off-site direct or "in lieu" water recharge that benefits the Local Aquifer; (including conservation measures) and (3) naturally occurring recharge within the Project Area."*

The Board of Supervisors approved the Northshore at Millerton Lake project on December 8, 2008 and required the following condition to provide for a 1:1 water balance:

*"The proposed project shall demonstrate through Best Management Practices a groundwater balance of 1:1 prior to recordation of the final map. This shall account for an demonstrate an equal balance for all water inflow to, water outflow from, and changes in water storage as a result of this project."*

These are the two projects that have been conditioned to provide for a 1:1 water balance prior to development. In both instances the County utilized its police powers in conditioning the projects, and identified a less than significant impact as it relates to groundwater due primarily because of the reduced pumpage for municipal and industrial uses as opposed to an agricultural operation.

The Planning Commission has had two previous workshops related to defining a Groundwater Balance; based on those meetings the Planning Department has prepared the following questions for consideration by the Planning Commission:

1. What projects should be required to have a 1:1 water balance?
  - a. Residential
  - b. Commercial
  - c. Industrial
  - d. Agricultural
2. What area of development should be required to have a 1:1 water balance?
  - a. Countywide
  - b. South of Madera Canal
  - c. Different requirements for different geographic areas
3. How large of a project should require a water balance?
  - a. Residential Subdivisions of 50+ lots?
  - b. Commercial Developments of 50,000 sq ft or larger?
  - c. Industrial Development of 100,000 sq. ft.?
  - d. New Agricultural Development over 10 acres?

cc: File