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Sustainable Conservation Releases Key Water Quality Guidance for On-Farm Recharge

San Francisco, CA - July 21, 2021 - [Sustainable Conservation](#), a San Francisco- and Modesto-based non-profit, has developed two key resources to inform on-farm recharge practices that are protective of water quality.

Protecting Water Quality

Over 600,000 Californians rely on nitrate-contaminated public supply wells for their household water needs. Many others struggle with contaminated groundwater from private, domestic wells – so the numbers are even greater. Recharging groundwater with water quality as a top priority will help the San Joaquin Valley – our nation’s premier farming region – manage through California’s inevitable droughts, ensure safe drinking water for farm-adjacent communities, and support a thriving agricultural economy as the region complies with the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#).

Achieving Groundwater Sustainability

Conceived in coordination with a diverse group of stakeholders and supported by a committee of San Joaquin Valley leaders, our [nitrate management brief](#) and [water quality research paper](#) compile the best available science with Sustainable Conservation’s decade-plus of on-the-ground experience with groundwater recharge. Replenishing aquifers by allowing surface water to seep into the ground has great potential to help water managers and agricultural communities achieve groundwater sustainability. However, when recharging on farm fields - a practice known in water management circles as Agricultural Managed Aquifer Recharge (AgMAR) - the potential mobilization of nitrate and salts is a serious concern, and this guidance suite presents field- and regional-scale considerations to protect community water quality.

Building Inclusive Partnerships

For over 25 years, Sustainable Conservation has built a theory of change on the bedrock of inclusive partnerships, shared resources, and innovation. Together, and only together, can we successfully steward our most precious natural resources for all Californians. Our focus on a sustainable, clean water supply means we’re building transformative, science-based solutions with California agriculture. Our agricultural economy feeds and leads the nation, and our community water security is critical.

“California is experiencing another intense and prolonged drought, and as we plan for long-term groundwater stability we have to think holistically,” said Ashley Boren, Sustainable Conservation Chief Executive Officer. “When we work to improve our water supply, any action we take needs to balance quantity and quality considerations. Sustainable Conservation’s water quality guidance draws on our proven track record of forging practical partnerships, proving innovative technologies, and compiling available science to drive integrated solutions.”

“Recharge is a powerful, beneficial way to boost our water sustainability in California, but it needs to be done with unintended consequences in mind,” said Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch Vice President & General Manager, and recharge pioneer. “The guidance that Sustainable Conservation developed can help me replenish our underground reserves, and protect the quality of those reserves for everyone.”

“Millions of Californians rely on groundwater for household water needs, and yet our aquifers are dwindling. We need sustainable solutions that improve water supply and protect water quality,” said Aysha Massell, Sustainable Conservation Water for the Future Program Director. “Groundwater recharge is an important tool in our sustainability tool belt. Setting out a science-based framework for protecting water quality when practicing on-farm recharge means growers, water managers, and communities can help replenish our aquifers properly, in ways that protect and benefit drinking water.”

“As Groundwater Sustainability Agencies codify practices to attain groundwater sustainability, community drinking water quality must be front and center in any effort to protect our water supplies,” said Amanda Monaco, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability Water Programs Policy Coordinator. “Sustainable Conservation’s guidance is key for growers, water managers, and communities who want to practice recharge, so they can do so in ways that protect drinking water.”

“Sustainable Conservation works on complex issues through a broad, integrated lens - how do we solve a problem before us in ways that don’t create other problems along the way?” said Taylor Broadhead, Sustainable Conservation Water and Dairy Programs Project Manager. “When we address water quantity, we need a path forward that is also mindful of water quality, so we created this guidance to help recharge practitioners manage risks to community drinking water supplies.”

“At the Water Foundation, we want to support efforts that result in lasting solutions to secure safe water for people,” said Mike Myatt, Water Foundation Healthy Watershed Program Officer. “Sustainable Conservation’s decade of water work nets important, proven solutions that benefit all Californians, and this water quality guidance is another vital tool to help people practice recharge right.”

Sustainable Conservation will share its new guidance widely with growers, water managers, community organizers, and our broader audience of friends and supporters through our various events, webinars, and publications. For all media inquiries, please contact [Christa Harader](#), Sustainable Conservation Digital Content Producer. If you need technical assistance or would

like to request a small group presentation for your community or organization, please contact [Taylor Broadhead](#), Sustainable Conservation Water and Dairies Project Manager.

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About Sustainable Conservation

Founded in San Francisco in 1993, Sustainable Conservation helps California thrive by uniting people to solve the toughest challenges facing our land, air, and water. Every day, we bring together business, landowners and government to steward the resources that we all depend on in ways that are just and make economic sense.

For more information and to connect with Sustainable Conservation, visit suscon.org. You can follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).