



AB 574 (Quirk) Potable Reuse Regulation

As of March 5, 2017

Background

California is a world leader in potable reuse, or using highly purified recycled water for drinking water purposes. Potable reuse is currently used for groundwater recharge of drinking water supplies in many places in California and it will soon be used to augment surface water reservoirs that store drinking water supplies.

In early 2017, the State Water Resources Control Board (Board) – pursuant to Water Code Section 13562 – issued a report to the California Legislature titled, “Investigation on the Feasibility of Developing Uniform Water Recycling Criteria for Direct Potable Reuse (Report)”. In the report, the Board made the finding that direct potable reuse (DPR) regulations could be developed safely, although additional potable reuse research must first be completed.

The issuance of the report, which was years in the making and completed in consultation with an Expert Panel, represents a major milestone in the development of drought-proof water supplies for California. New potable reuse projects have the potential to provide an additional 1.1 million-acre-feet (MAF) of water supplies per year, enough to serve more than 8 million Californians or one-fifth of the state’s population by 2020, according to a 2014 report by the Water Environment & Reuse Foundation.

AB 574 Summary

AB 574 will establish a statutory deadline for the Division of Drinking Water (DDW) within the Board, to develop a policy and sequential regulations for potable reuse that are consistent with the newly issued DPR report to the Legislature.

Additionally, AB 574 will eliminate the confusing distinction between “Indirect Potable Reuse” (IPR) and “Direct Potable Reuse” (DPR) and just call it “potable reuse.” As technology and the science of potable reuse have evolved since the passage of SB 918 (Pavley 2010), as reflected in the DPR report to the Legislature, there is a continuum of potable reuse projects that are appropriately distinguished through the use of four subcategories - groundwater augmentation, reservoir augmentation, raw water augmentation and treated water augmentation. AB 574 defines “potable reuse” as well as all these subcategories.

This bill also requires that the Board adopt statewide regulations for “raw water augmentation,” or the planned placement of recycled water into a raw or untreated water distribution system serving a public water system, by December 2021. If the Board cannot finalize the research and complete the regulations by this time, AB 574 allows the Board to extend the deadline by 18 months. If the Board still cannot complete the regulations for raw water augmentation, AB 574 specifies that the Board must convene an expert panel to help determine when the research and regulations can be completed.

Support

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