

## **Public Well Log Information = Effective Groundwater Management**

### **The Problem**

Since 1949, well drillers have been required to complete and submit to the state a well drilling report that identifies the key characteristics of every new well – construction type, location, depth, screening levels and the hydrogeologic characteristics of the soil encountered in construction. This information can provide critically important 3-dimensional information about a groundwater aquifer, and the Department of Water Resources has hundreds of thousands of reports on file. Unfortunately, these well completion reports are not accessible by the public. For over 50 years the state – through statute - has denied the public access to this critical information, allowing only governmental agencies to access these records. This has prevented California from fully understanding the geological, hydrological, and water quality characteristics of a basin necessary to sustainably manager groundwater resources.

### **Inadequate Information Leads to Poor Basin Management and Wasted Resources**

As the drought worsens, more and more people throughout the state are experiencing dry wells or wells where the water is no longer potable due to ever increasing concentrations of dangerous contaminants. Many affected by the drought reside within disadvantaged communities (DACs) and cannot afford to drill new wells when their supply is lost or threatened. Agriculture and the economy also continue to be impacted by the drought, experiencing losses upwards of \$1 billion a year.<sup>1</sup> The lack of robust, public information about the groundwater basins which support the people, environment, and economy of the state exacerbates the already devastating effects caused by the drought.

Because the state’s vast database of well log information is not publicly available, local agencies, consultants, academics and communities looking for safe water supplies must develop their own information in order to develop groundwater models, discover the water quality characteristics of a basin, or determine which wells are likely to go dry. Where local agencies can’t afford it, the costs of this restrictive policy have prevented local basin characterization altogether. Local private actors, including industries and non-profit community groups need access to these vital records necessary to design effective projects. Removing this restriction will help communities protect or replace their water supplies, allow for the development of robust groundwater models, and provide local groundwater sustainability agencies with the tools needed to develop effective groundwater sustainability plans.

### **The Solution: SB 20**

- Makes well logs available to the public upon request.
- Requires those requesting well log data to identify themselves and the reason for their request.
- Protects the privacy of well owners by redacting personal information.
- Requires a disclosure statement regarding the appropriate use of the data.
- Authorizes the DWR to charge a fee for copies of the well logs.
- Requires the DWR to maintain copies of all requests for five years.

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<sup>1</sup> Howitt et al., UC Davis (July 2014), [Economic Analysis of the 2014 Drought for California Agriculture](https://watershed.ucdavis.edu/files/biblio/DroughtReport_23July2014_0.pdf), [https://watershed.ucdavis.edu/files/biblio/DroughtReport\\_23July2014\\_0.pdf](https://watershed.ucdavis.edu/files/biblio/DroughtReport_23July2014_0.pdf).