Groundwater Glossary

Groundwater accounts for roughly one-third of LA County's water supply. While not all areas of LA County have effective groundwater basins, those that do sometimes rely on this source for up to 90% of their supplies. This glossary explains essential terms, so you can better understand how this hidden system supports our region.

Aquifer:	A natural basin below the Earth's surface that is porous and permeable enough to store water.
Enhanced Replenishment:	The process of intentionally recharging groundwater basins by using imported water, recycled water or captured stormwater.
Extraction/Pumping:	The process of withdrawing groundwater through wells so it can be treated and used throughout the region.
Groundwater:	Water that is stored in pores and spaces between soil, sand and rock beneath the Earth's surface.
Groundwater Basin:	An underground area made up of one or more aquifers that stores groundwater.
Injection Well:	A well drilled deep into the Earth's surface that helps add water to aquifers and manage seawater intrusion.
Monitoring Well:	A small well that helps track groundwater levels, water quality and the overall health of aquifers over time.
Natural Recharge:	The natural process of rainwater soaking into the ground and refilling a groundwater basin.
Percolation:	The process of water naturally soaking through soil and rock to refill aquifers.
Production Well:	A well that extracts groundwater to the surface, where it is treated and used for consumption, irrigation, or industrial use.
Recharge:	The process of manually infiltrating or injecting water into a groundwater aquifer.
Safe Yield:	The amount of groundwater that an aquifer can safely produce each year to preserve long-term balance between water usage and recharge.
Saturated Zone:	Areas where the soil and rocks are fully saturated with water, creating natural underground reservoirs.
Seawater Barrier:	A system of wells that prevents ocean water from contaminating local groundwater supplies by injecting fresh water into coastal aquifers.
Spreading Grounds:	Engineered water conservation basins that help replenish underlying aquifers.
Overdraft:	Occurs when groundwater usage exceeds replenishment, leading to decreasing water levels and damage to the aquifers.
Water Table:	The top of saturated zones, which helps indicate the amount of groundwater stored in aquifers.