

# Facts About Big Bear's Water Supply

In Big Bear Valley, we are surrounded by water. It's sometimes hard to imagine that our supply of drinking water might ever be in jeopardy. But these facts show how fragile our water situation really is:

- Our drinking water comes exclusively from groundwater.
- The water in our lake is owned by downstream users, not us.
- We are now entering our sixth year of below-average precipitation.
- We are approaching the point where we will be taking more from the groundwater aquifer than nature can replenish.
- In the event of a severe, extended drought there is no means to import water into our community.
- The groundwater supply is fed by rain and snowmelt, which seeps through the soil to the local aquifers. This water is recovered for consumer use via wells.
- Water shortages are the inevitable result if, year after year, more groundwater is used than is replenished by precipitation.
- The safe groundwater yield is 3,050 to 2,780 acre-feet per year – demand will soon surpass the low-end estimates of safe yield.
- It's critical that we maintain storage in our reservoirs when our wells run very low during high demand.
- Because there is little rainfall during the summer, lawns and other vegetation not "drought-adapted" require extensive irrigation.
- A dramatic increase in lawn acreage has put a tremendous strain on our water supply. Most water used on lawns never seeps far enough into the soil to replenish the aquifer.

- The summer irrigation of lawns, together with a large influx of visitors, makes it hard for the water delivery system to meet daily demand.
- The problem is not the fault of any one segment of our population or economy, but rather the responsibility of all. Construction and real estate are crucial for our economic vitality.
- The increased demand that has been created by the installation and watering of landscaping in the last 5 years has far exceeded the demand from new construction.
- In the summer months, a third of water consumers are full-time residents and two-thirds are part-time visitors. This ratio has not changed significantly in 20 years.
- Big Bear will always have cycles of wet and dry. Water conservation and the wise use of water must become a way of life for all of us.
- Big Bear's environment is our treasure. It is the reason people want to visit, enjoy and live in the Valley. It is our duty to work together to preserve this magnificent inheritance.

## Solutions: Planning From the Ground Up

Current trends are not sustainable. As population, tourism and economic activity grow, new sources of water will be imperative. And with the lake off limits, the solution must be sophisticated application of new technologies.

In addition to conservation, that means increasing the production and use of recycled water, as well as benefiting from the proven technology of "groundwater replenishment" to keep our underground aquifer full.

Recycled water can be used where potable water is not necessary, such as in irrigation, fire fighting, wetlands preservation and dust control at construction sites. The Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency (BBARWA) is also engaged in extensive testing of another promising use for recycled water – recharging the groundwater aquifer. Under this process, recycled water would undergo additional treatment, including microfiltration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet disinfection. Then it would be allowed to slowly seep back through the soil, where it would merge with existing groundwater. This process – proven in communities across the country – uses the benefits of both man-made and natural filtration to keep our underground water supply at a healthy and sustainable level.

Once these solutions are fully implemented, our Valley will enjoy an enduring water supply that is drought-proof, reliable and locally-controlled. With an eye to cost, safety and efficiency, BBARWA is taking the necessary steps now to avoid a future of shortages.

For more information, and to contribute your vital ideas and support, please call 584-4018 or visit [www.bbarwa.org](http://www.bbarwa.org).



**BIG BEAR AREA**  
REGIONAL WASTEWATER AGENCY