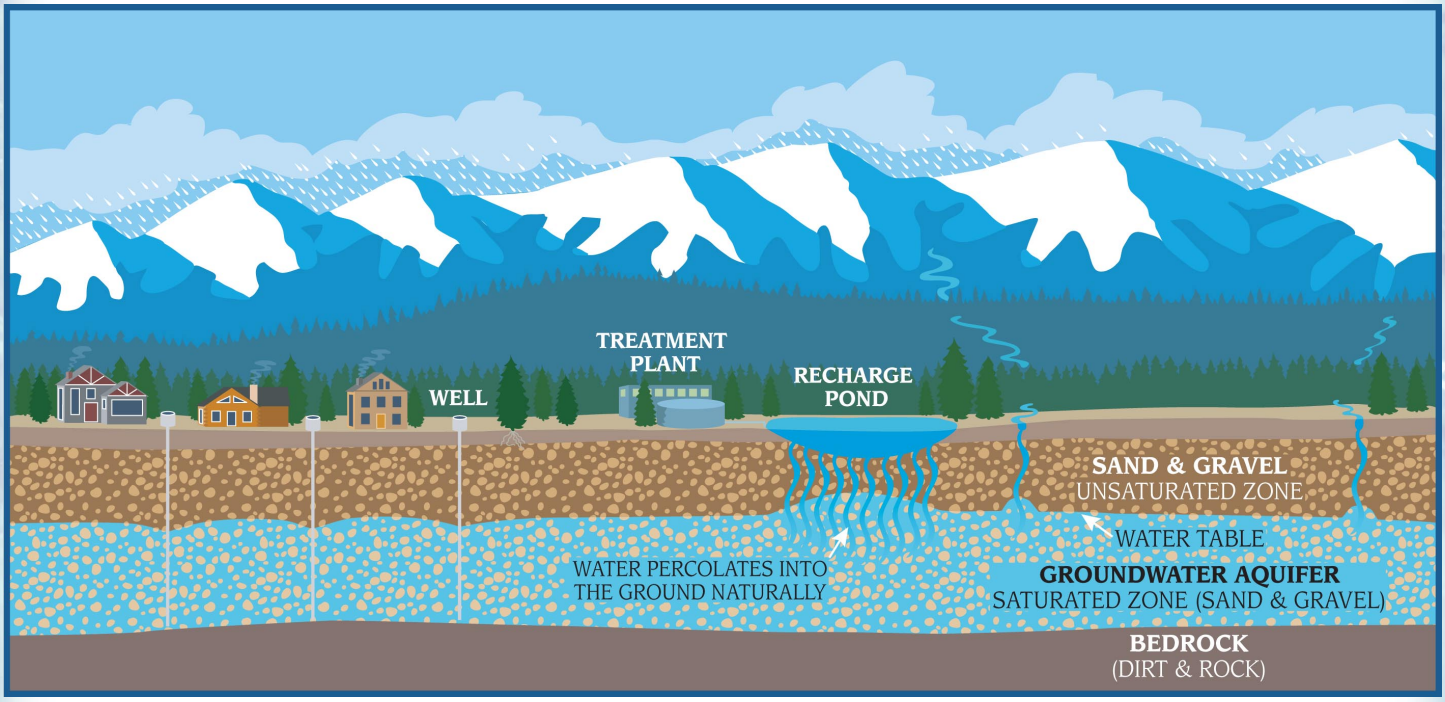
Our Source: Understanding Big Bear's Water Supply



Our drinking water comes exclusively from groundwater. Groundwater is stored in an aquifer which is an underground layer of saturated soil or rock that holds water similar to how a sponge holds water.

- The water in our lake is owned by downstream users and is not used for providing drinking water to our community.
- Big Bear has multiple aquifers. Unfortunately, the lower aquifer is often too high in dissolved minerals to be used for drinking water or does not yield large enough quantities of water to wells.
- Due to residents changing from part time to full time occupancy, the gradual growth in population, and inefficient landscaping such as lawns, the demand on our groundwater can exceed our safe yield.
- The increase in lawn acreage has put a strain on our water supply. Most water used on lawns never seeps far enough into the soil to replenish the aquifer.
- Importing water into our community is cost prohibitive and we are currently exporting recycled water to Lucerne Valley.
- It is critical to plan for the future and safeguard our municipal water wells from going dry.

The Continuous Movement of Water

The water in your drinking glass today is the same water that was around when the dinosaurs roamed the earth. There is no new water – all water is recycled. Water takes a continuous journey through the water cycle: the movement of water from the sky to the earth and back to the sky again.

With an increased need for water by people, businesses, and agriculture, nature is requiring us to use our water resources more carefully. In arid regions such as Southern California with recurring droughts, it is increasingly more important to make sure we have secure water supplies for future generations.

Saving for a Sunny Day

The Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency (BBARWA), in cooperation with other local agencies, has examined different options for securing our future water supplies. The most promising option is to implement a groundwater recharge system. By continually recharging the local groundwater aquifer, we can make sure to have adequate water supplies even during drought years.

A groundwater recharge program simply accelerates the natural water cycle process. A recharge system would take recycled water and put it through an additional three step process of microfiltration, reverse osmosis, and ultraviolet disinfection. After these additional treatment processes, the purified water is poured into recharge ponds where it blends with rain, snow or blend water and filters naturally into the aquifer through the soil, just as rainwater does.

Over time, the recharged water will help to steadily build up water supplies in our groundwater aquifer just like adding money to a savings account. Even if the drought were to end tomorrow, we still need the groundwater project to supplement our groundwater supply.

Recharge Project Takes the Next Step

At the beginning of 2005, the BBARWA Governing Board examined reports from technical consultants and staff, reviewed recommendations from the BBARWA Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC), and voted to continue to move forward with investigations related to a proposed 1,000 acre-feet per year groundwater recharge project. Although there are more studies to complete, the Governing Board was satisfied with the progress of the project and has allowed work to advance.

Get Involved!

An important part of BBARWA's recharge project has been citizen involvement and feedback. We would like to encourage more community members to get involved. Have your local community organization host a presentation about Big Bear's upcoming projects, attend a regularly scheduled meeting, take a tour of the regional treatment plant or log on to **www.bigbearwatersolutions.org** to learn more.

To contact BBARWA, please call **(909) 584-4018** or send an email to **info@bbarwa.org.**

BBARWA

Reclaiming Our Community's Vital Water Resources

BIG BEAR AREA
REGIONAL WASTEWATER AGENCY