

**Water and Growth in California:
SB 610 Water Supply Assessments**

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Balancing growing communities with sustainable resources has long been an issue in California. In 2002, the California legislature passed a law (termed Senate Bill 610 or SB 610 based on the initial legislation) requiring new development projects to assess the sufficiency of water supply. SB 610 requires the local public water system to prepare a Water Supply Assessment (WSA). The water supply assessment documents sources of water supply, quantifies water demands, evaluates drought impacts, and provides a comparison of water supply and demand that is the basis for an assessment of water supply sufficiency.

Although this law was passed in 2002, implementation has been slow and the interpretation of an appropriate scope for a WSA is evolving. Each WSA has its own challenges including coordination among agencies, dealing with lack of data, defining the scope of groundwater analysis, predicting future water demand of a community, and forecasting future availability of water sources. Even a project's need for a WSA can spark debate. The requirements of SB 610 are designed to ensure there are sufficient resources for the community in the future. The process of preparing a WSA often opens communication among stakeholders including regional managers, water wholesalers and retailers, county and city planning staff, and developers. This communication and the cooperation on the shared goal of a sustainable community is progress towards achieving the balance of water and growth in California.