

CWAG Glossary of Water Terms

This introductory list of basic water terms will help you understand your local water issues:

- **Active Management Area** – A geographic area that has been designated by the state legislature as requiring active management of groundwater withdrawals from pumping.
- **Aquifer** – A geologic formation, group of formations, or part of a formation that contains sufficient saturated permeable material to yield significant quantities of water to springs and wells.
- **Artificial Recharge** – The deliberate act of adding water to a groundwater aquifer by means of a recharge project. Artificial recharge can be accomplished via injection wells, spreading basins, or in-stream projects. (See also natural recharge.)
- **Assured Water Supply** – A term defined as a supply of water theoretically sufficient to meet the needs of a new development or customers of a municipal water supplier for 100 years.
- **Base flow** – Streamflow derived from groundwater seepage into the stream. Base flow does not include runoff from precipitation events or snowmelt.
- **Groundwater** – All the water contained in the void space within rock units in the zone of saturation.
- **Hydrologic Budget** – An accounting of the inflow to, outflow from, and storage in, a hydrologic unit, such as a drainage basin, aquifer, soil zone, lake, reservoir, or irrigation project.
- **Hydrologic Cycle** – The constant circulation of water from the sea, through the atmosphere, to the land, and its eventual return to the atmosphere by way of transpiration and evaporation from the sea and the land surfaces.
- **Natural Recharge** – Natural replenishment of an aquifer generally from snowmelt and storm runoff. (See also artificial recharge.)
- **Safe Yield** – In Arizona law means a groundwater management goal for an Active Management Area that attempts to achieve and maintain a long-term balance between the annual amount of groundwater withdrawn and the annual amount of natural and artificial recharge.
- **Saturated Zone** (zone of saturation) – A subsurface zone in which all the interstices or voids in a rock unit are filled with water.
- **Sustainability, Hydrologic** – The use of water in such a way that available water supports the ability of human society to endure and flourish into the indefinite future without undermining the integrity of the hydrological cycle or the ecological systems that depend on it.
- **Water Table** – The top water surface of an unconfined aquifer at atmospheric pressure; the upper surface of a zone of saturation.

