

***Napa County Public Draft  
2026 Water Availability Analysis  
Guidance Document and  
Technical Report***

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# Outline

**Napa County Groundwater  
Management and Water  
Availability Analysis (WAA)**

**Public Draft 2026 WAA Procedure  
and Screening Process**

**Summary of 2026 Updates and  
Next Steps**

# Napa County: Groundwater Management and Water Availability Analysis

## ❖ **Napa County Groundwater Conservation Ordinance:**

- County Code Section 13.15, describes activities requiring discretionary approval of use permits to develop groundwater as a source of water supply.

## ❖ **Water Availability Analysis (WAA) (1991 through 2015):**

- Established groundwater use thresholds across residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial sectors, based on the premise that projects must operate so as not to create a net deficit in the local groundwater supply.

## ❖ **2015 WAA includes components for evaluating:**

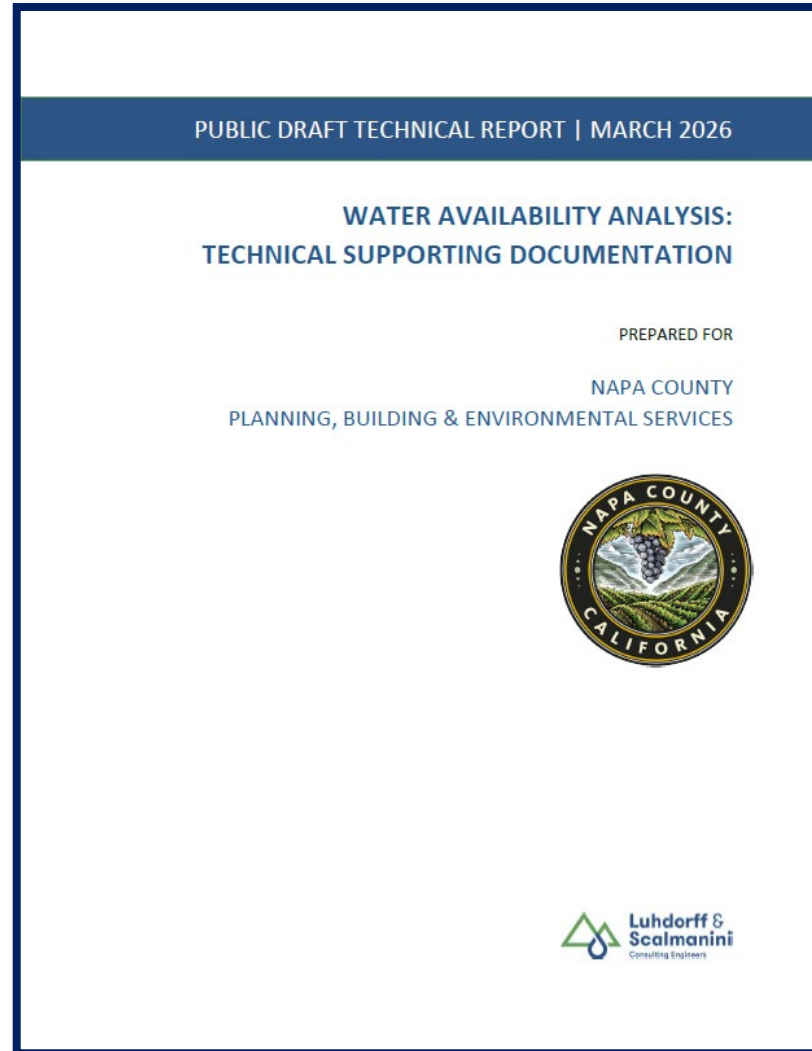
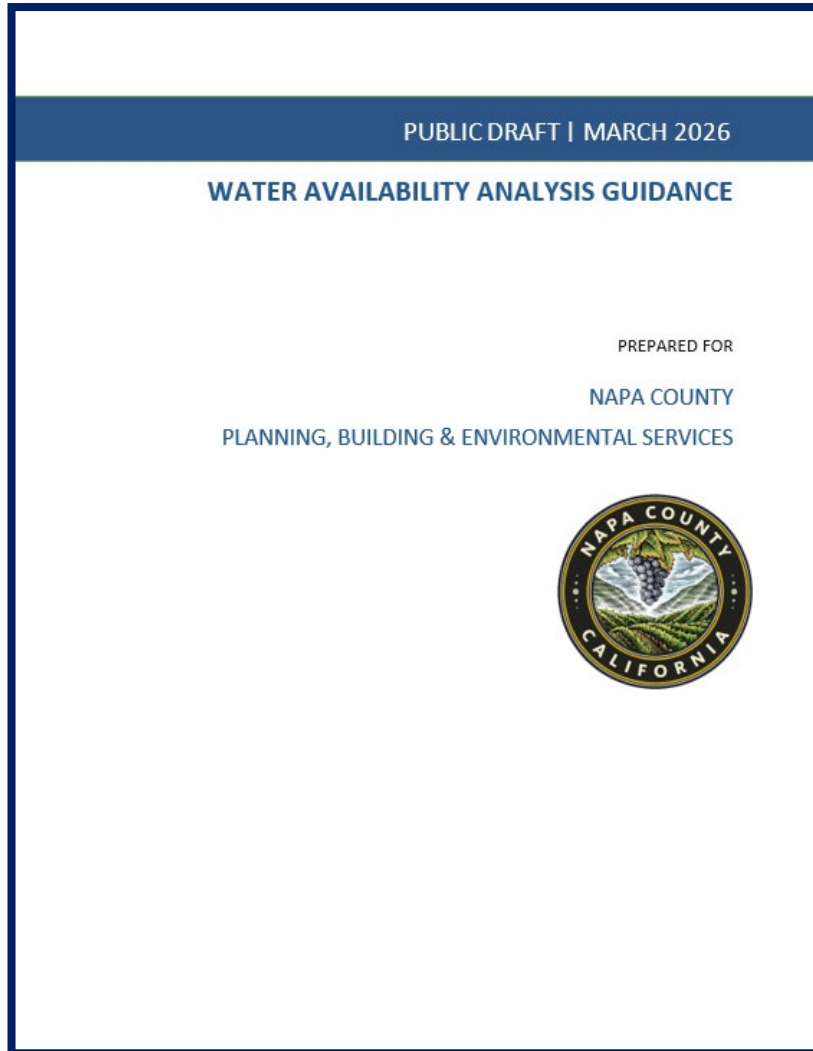
- Potential adverse impacts on the groundwater basin as a whole,
- On groundwater levels in neighboring non-project wells, and
- On surface waters.

## ❖ **Napa Valley Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (2022)**

## ❖ **Governor's Executive Order N-7-22, Public Trust, and Related Actions (2022-2023)**

## ❖ **Public Draft 2026 WAA Guidance Document and Technical Report**

# Public Draft 2026 WAA Guidance and Technical Report



**Two Public Draft Documents released  
March 27 for review  
and feedback**

# 2026 WAA Guidance Document and Technical Report

## Summary of Changes to 2015 WAA for the 2026 WAA

WAA Requirement	WAA Change
Groundwater Use and WAA Applicability	<b>3</b> existing groundwater areas (and <b>1</b> new area located within the Napa Valley Subbasin) are delineated for specific WAA requirements.
Tier 1: Groundwater Use	Groundwater use criteria are updated for the areas delineated in the WAA; the determination of recharge for areas outside the Napa Valley Subbasin is streamlined.
Tier 2: Well and Spring Interference	Clarification of methodology
Tier 3: Surface Water and Groundwater Interaction	Additional screening criteria and protective standards for groundwater extraction inside and outside the Napa River Watershed, within 1,500 feet of significant streams

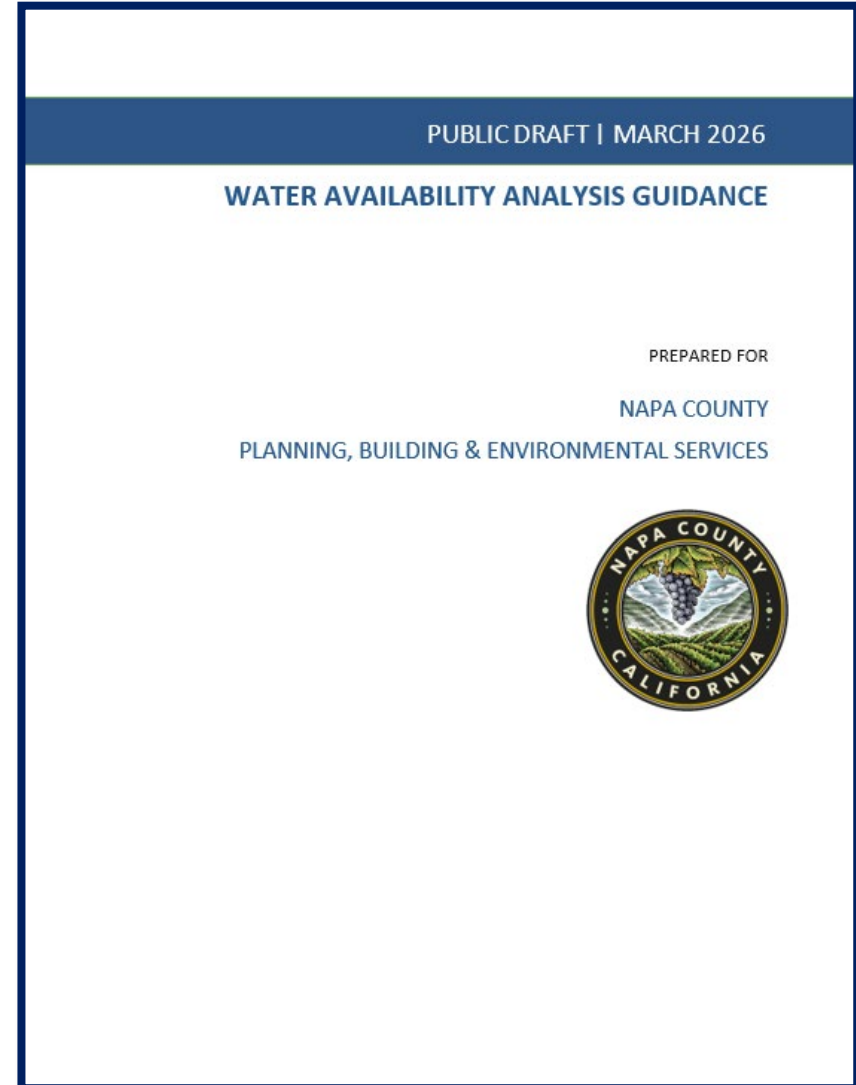
# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process

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# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process

- Extraction Locations
- Screening Process
  - ❖ Tier 1: Water Use Criteria
  - ❖ Tier 2: Well Interference Criterion
  - ❖ Tier 3: Groundwater/Surface Water Interaction (Potential Streamflow Depletion) Criterion

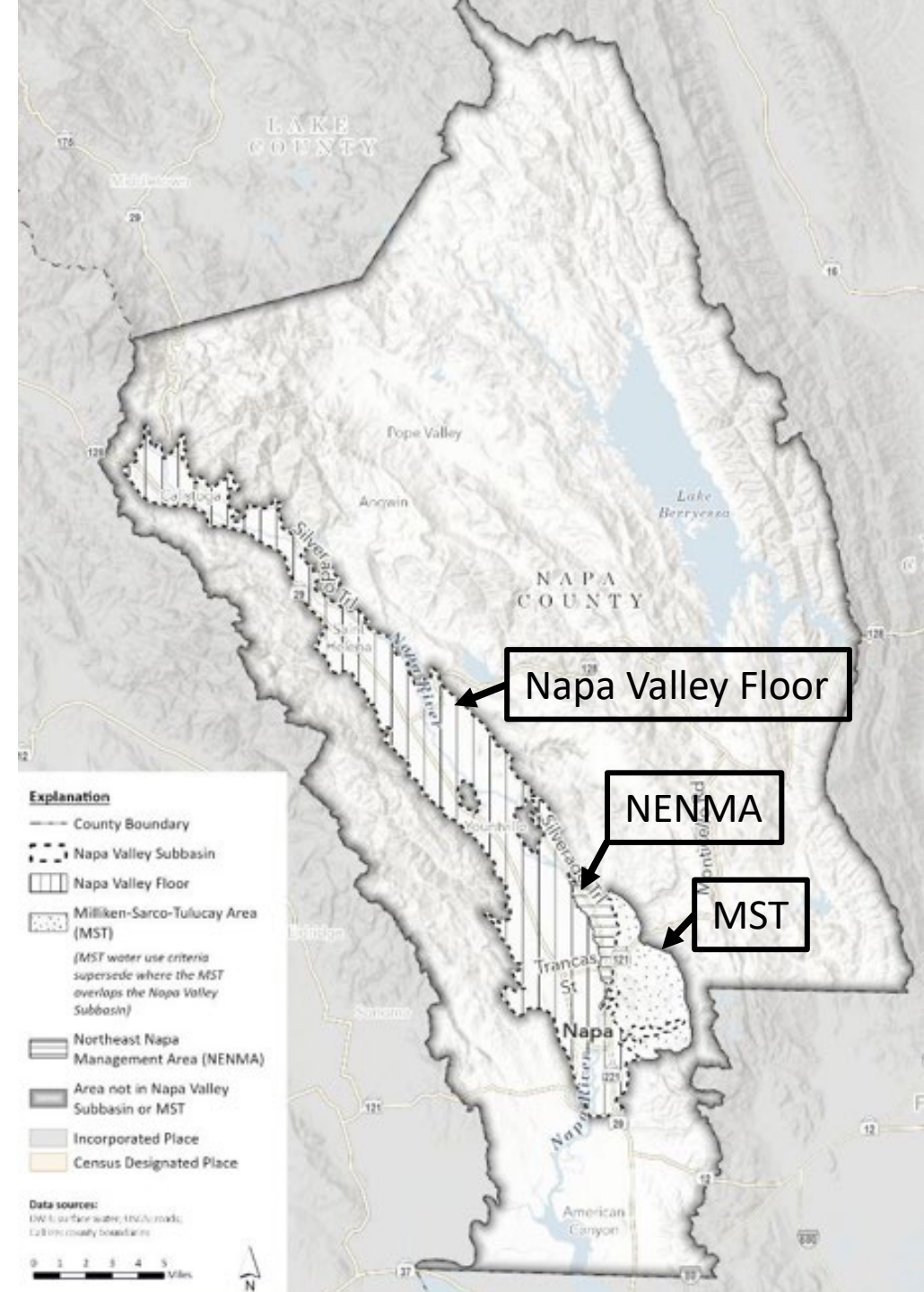


# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process: Extraction Locations

*Historical WAAs referred to the Napa Valley Floor, but very specific Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) requirements apply to the Napa Valley Subbasin.*

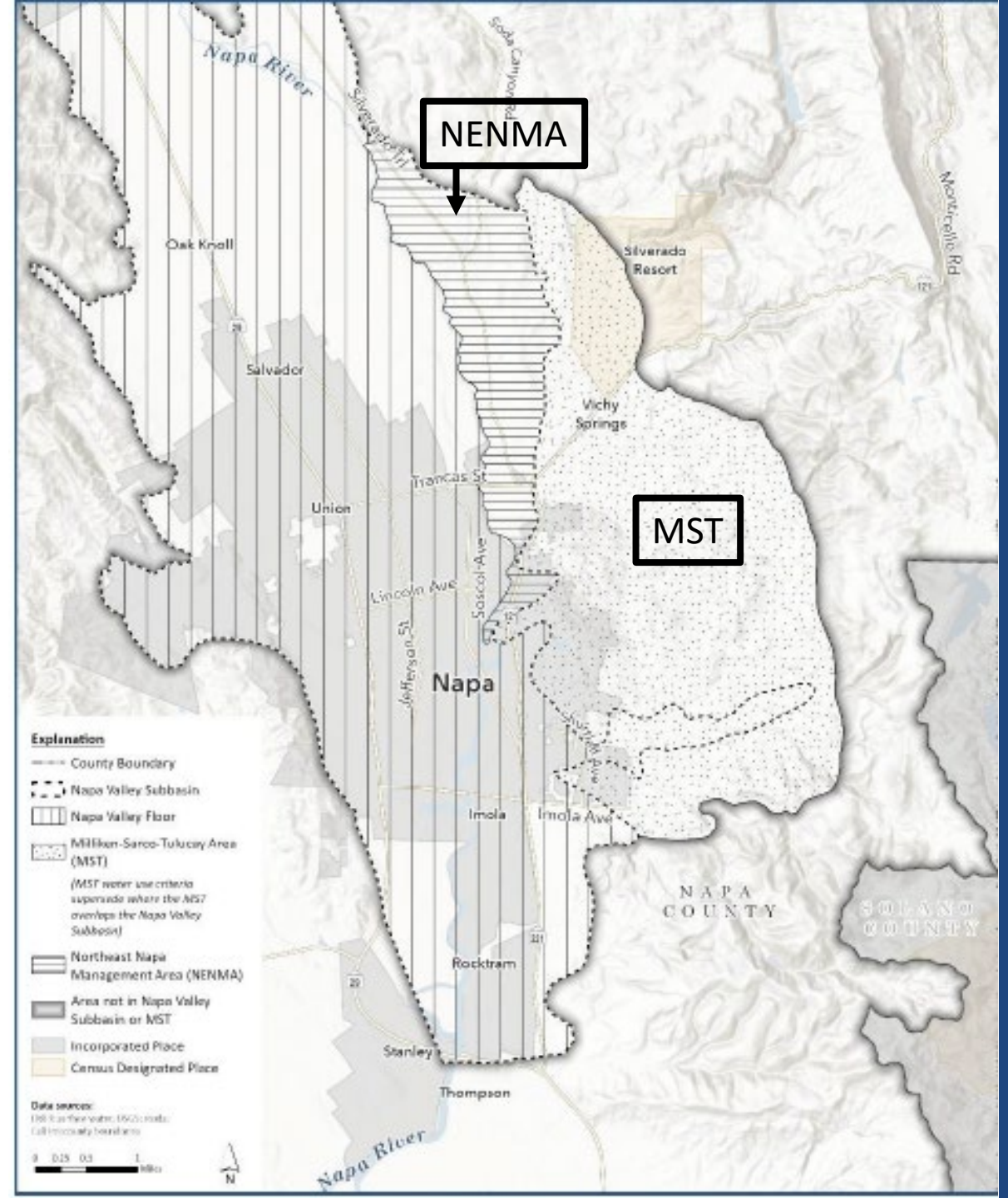
## 2026 WAA Extraction Locations Clarified:

- **Napa Valley Floor:** Area excluding Northeast Napa Management Area (NENMA) and portion of Subbasin extending into MST
- **NENMA:** formally designated area in GSP
- **Milliken-Sarco-Tulucay (MST):** Refined groundwater deficient area
- **All Other Areas:** Areas outside the Subbasin and the MST



# Location Map Detail

- Zoomed in Map for MST and Northeast Napa Management Area (NENMA)

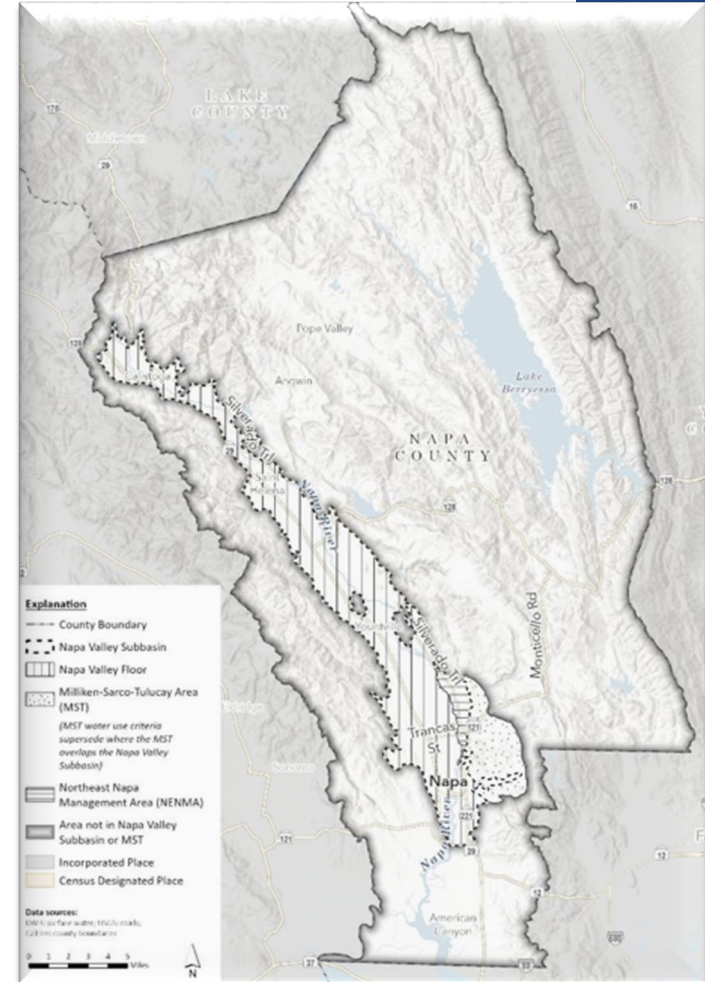


# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process: Tier 1

## Water Use Criteria

2026 WAA updates the method to determine the water use criteria for the Napa Valley Subbasin; considerations include:

- Sustainable yield of approximately 15,000 ac-ft/year determined for the Napa Valley Subbasin and documented in the most recent NCGSA-adopted and DWR-approved GSP.
- The proportion of the Napa Valley Subbasin sustainable yield that applies to designated management areas. (In 2026, this includes the Northeast Napa Management Area (NENMA) and the analyses conducted to determine the proportion of the Subbasin sustainable yield for the NENMA.)
- Current land use data.
- Current appropriative uses of groundwater (this includes the City of St. Helena at its designated “safe yield” of 350 acre-feet/year).



# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process: Tier 1 Water Use Criteria

- Based on the Napa Valley Subbasin sustainable yield of 15,000 acre-feet/year, the sustainable yield is proportioned into 3 parts.

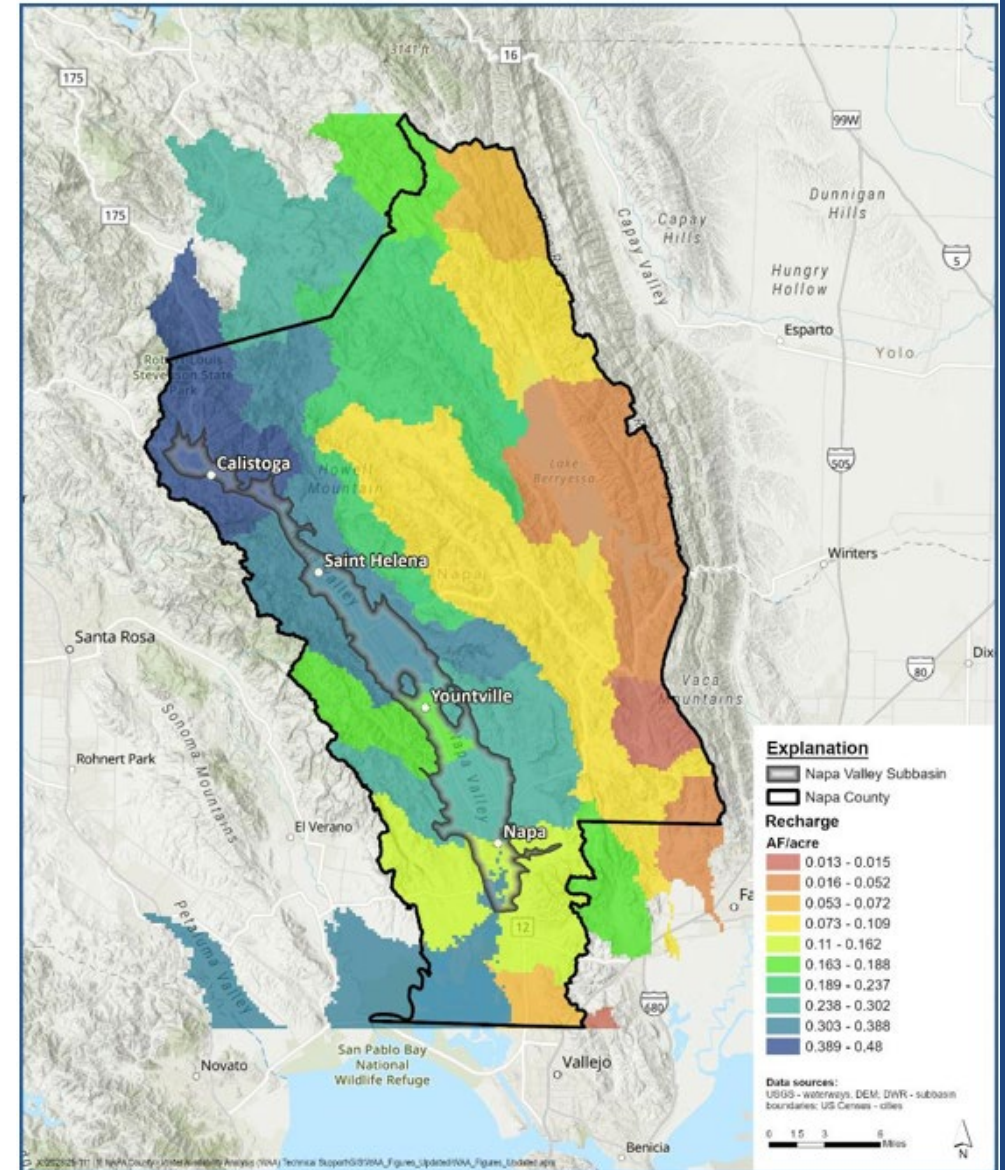
Groundwater Use Areas in the Napa Valley Subbasin	Acre-Feet/Year
<b>Napa Valley Floor</b> for areas with overlying groundwater uses (Subbasin area excluding NENMA and the portion of the Subbasin extending into the MST) and minus the appropriative use by the City of St. Helena	14,100
<b>NENMA</b> for areas with overlying groundwater uses	550
City of St. Helena appropriative use (assumed to be equal to the small proportion [2.3 percent] of the Subbasin sustainable yield allotted to the City) (an appropriative right is the right to divert and use a specific quantity of water)	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,000</b>



Voluntary efforts to engage in and promote **Water Conservation as a Napa Way of Life** are encouraged.

# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process: Tier 1 Site-Specific Recharge Analysis

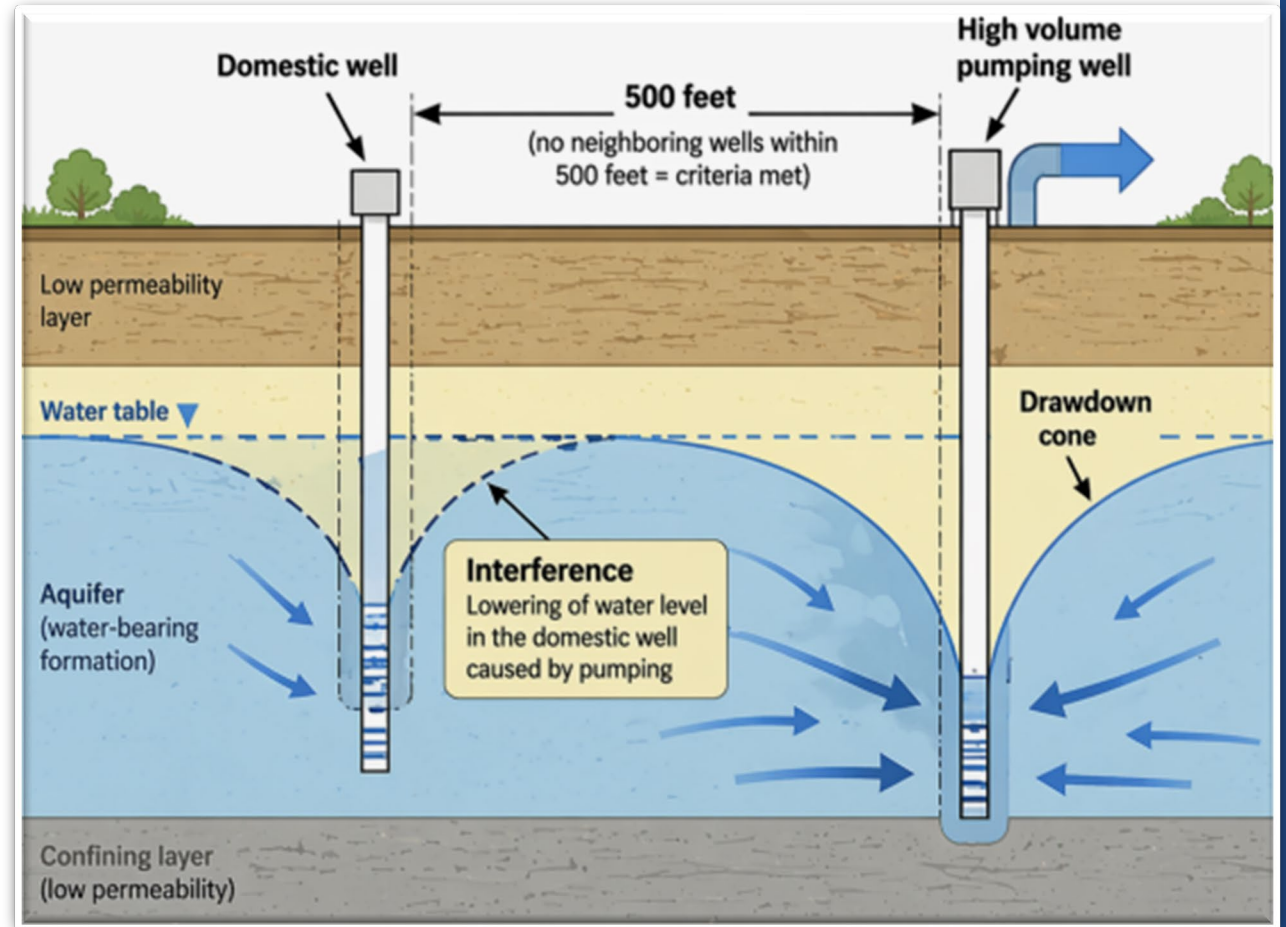
- **Streamlined Method**
  - Recharge estimates developed based on USGS Basin Characterization Model and a 10-year (2012-2021) period of PRISM data and site-specific information (parcel size, area with slope less than 30 percent)
- **Alternative Method**
  - Applicant may elect to have a site-specific analysis conducted by a registered professional



# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process: Tier 2

## Well Interference Criterion

- Well interference criterion is presumptively met if there are no neighboring wells located within 500 ft of the applicant's existing or proposed well(s).
- New or replacement domestic wells planned to be located within 500 ft of a neighboring well(s) should be sited as far as feasible from neighboring well(s).
- 2026 WAA clarifies the methodology for conducting the Tier 2 analysis.



# 2026 WAA Procedure and Screening Process: Tier 3 Groundwater/Surface Water Criterion

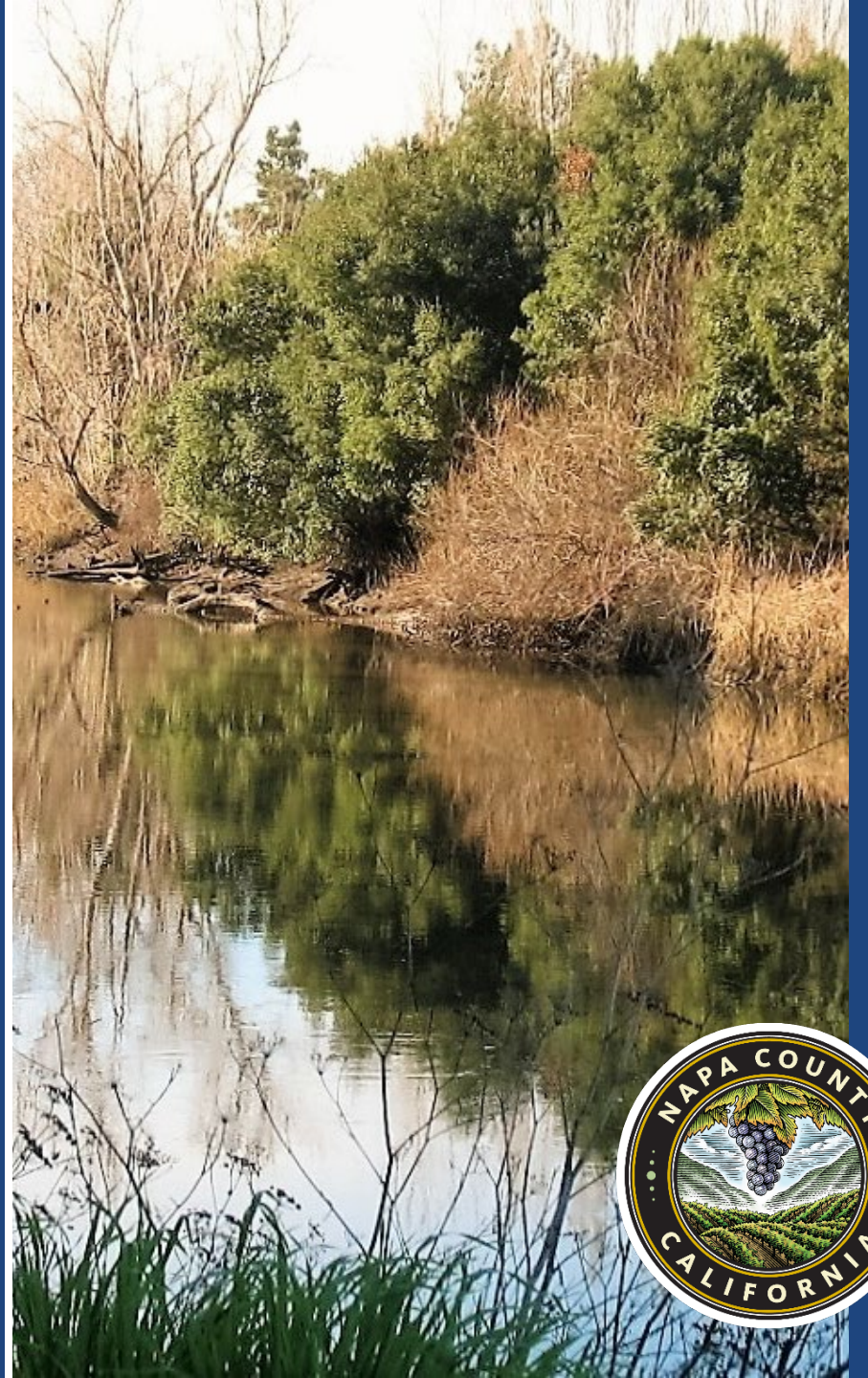
## Proximity of Well(s) to Significant Streams

- Greater than 1,500 ft presumptively meets criterion
- Within 1,500 ft various protective standards may apply
  - 0-500 ft: Metering and Reporting
  - Implement/enhance Water Conservation Best Management Practices
  - New or Replacement Wells: 150 ft well seal depth
- Meet applicable Water Use Criterion or demonstrate public trust considerations for proposed project design and operation and demonstrate reduced streamflow depletion



# Summary of 2026 WAA Updates and Next Steps

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# Summary of 2026 Draft Well Permitting Standards

## **WAA Tier 1: Inside the Subbasin (Napa Valley Floor and NENMA)**

- 0.5 ac-ft/ac in Napa Valley Floor or 0.3 ac-ft/ac in NENMA for new wells
- No net increase for new, replacement, or existing wells with new or increased use on property where existing use exceeds 0.5 ac-ft/ac Napa Valley Floor or 0.3 ac-ft/ac NENMA

## **WAA Tier 1: Outside the Subbasin**

- 0.3 ac-ft/ac (0.6 ac-ft/year total for domestic wells) MST and 0.3 ac-ft/ac for other wells in MST, or no net increase
- All Other Areas: Water use based on parcel specific recharge (other new, replacement or existing well(s)), or no net increase
  - Streamlined recharge method available

## **WAA Tiers 2 and 3**

- Demonstrate no significant interference with other wells located within 500 ft or 1,500 ft of springs (WAA Tier 2)
  - Methodology clarified
- Applicants must demonstrate implementation of protective standards to reduce streamflow depletion when well(s) within 1,500 ft of stream (WAA Tier 3)

## Next Steps

- **Public Review Draft  
Comments Received through  
May 26, 2026**
- **Napa County Planning  
Commission Meeting: May 6,  
2026**
- **Outreach and Stakeholder  
Meetings**





# Thank You!

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# WAA Tier 1: Previous (2015) Compared to Interim (2023 to present) and Draft 2026 WAA

Well Type	Groundwater Use	Inside Napa Valley Subbasin			Outside Napa Valley Subbasin		
		Previous (2015)	Interim Regulation	2026 Draft NVF; NENMA	Previous (2015)	Interim Regulation	2026 Draft MST; Other Areas
<b>NEW WELL</b>	Domestic - Individual User	NA	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3,6</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	NA	NA <sup>1</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>
	Commercial, Industrial, or Agricultural	1 ac-ft/ac <sup>2</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>2</sup>	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>
	Public Water System	1 ac-ft/ac <sup>2</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>2</sup>	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>
<b>REPLACEMENT WELL</b>	Domestic - Individual User	NA	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	NA	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>1,4</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>
	Commercial, Industrial, or Agricultural	NA	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	NA	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>
	Public Water System	NA	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	NA	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>
<b>EXISTING WELL</b>	New or Increased Water Use for Discretionary Project	1 ac-ft/ac	0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>3</sup>	0.5; 0.3 ac-ft/ac <sup>6,7</sup>	Parcel Specific Recharge	Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>	0.3 ac-ft/ac; Parcel Specific Recharge <sup>4</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Assumes less than 2-acre-feet per year of groundwater for individual domestic users.
- <sup>2</sup> Previous practice was to apply Tier 1 requirements to only Discretionary Project. No water use limits were imposed on a Ministerial Project.
- <sup>3</sup> Existing GW use exceeds 0.3 ac-ft/ac, then No Net Increase in GW use is required (Subject to Change by the GSA).
- <sup>4</sup> Existing GW use exceeds the Parcel Specific Recharge, then No Net Increase in GW use is required.
- <sup>5</sup> Analysis is not required when the replacement well is located further away from neighboring well, natural spring or Significant Stream, and no increase in GW use.
- <sup>6</sup> Requirement can be met by submitting a "Water Use Declaration" that reflects the allowed water usage.
- <sup>7</sup> Existing GW use exceeds 0.3 ac-ft/ac, then No Net Increase in GW use is required (Subject to Change by the GSA).