CALIFORNIA'S WELL STANDARDS

AND STORMWATER INJECTION WELLS

Disclaimer

Purpose...water quality protection only

Prevent entry of contaminated surface water to usable groundwater

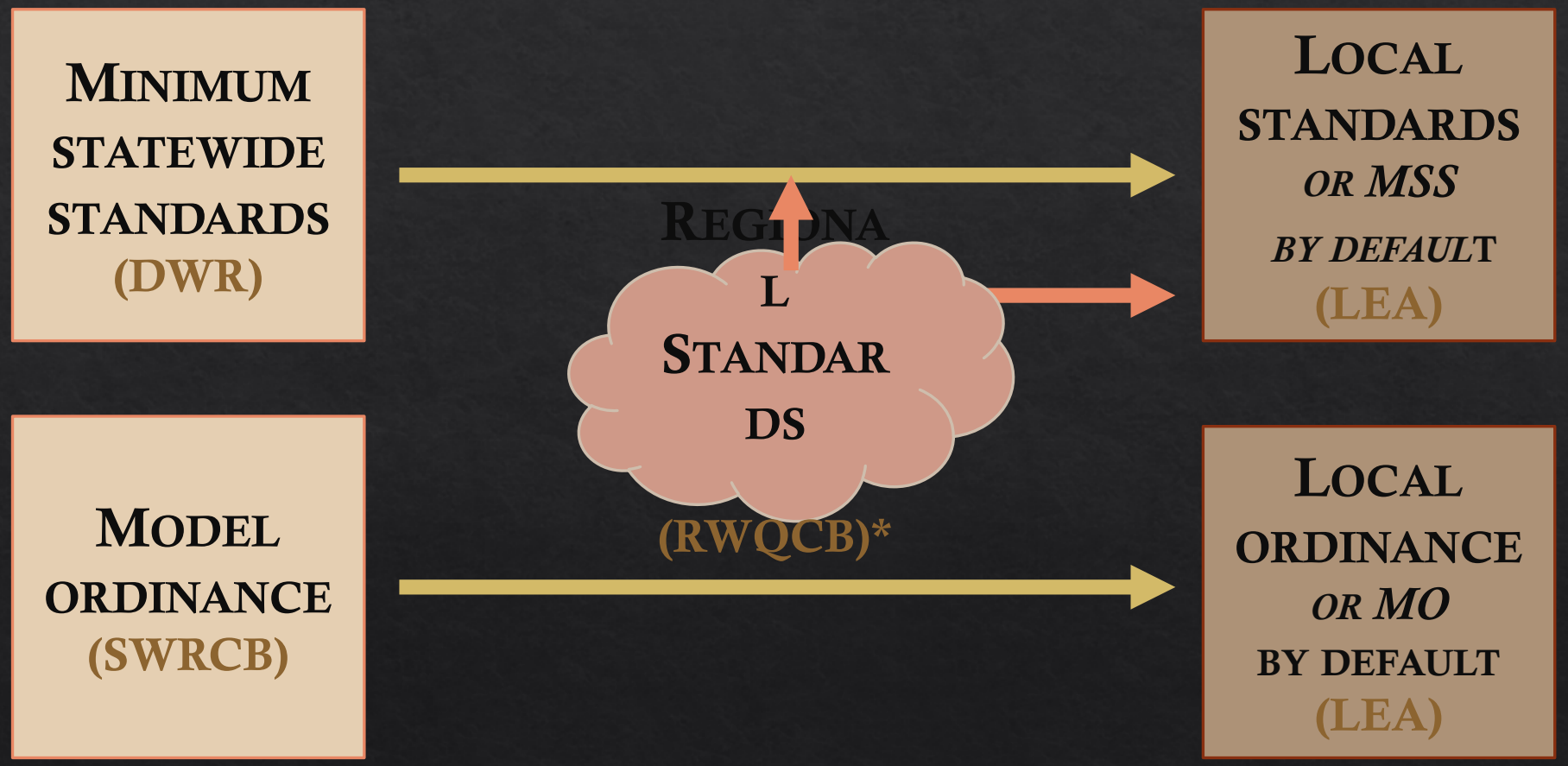
Prevent mixing of poor quality groundwater with usable groundwater

+

Safety hazard prevention

Water Code Sections 321, 13700, 13701, 13800, 13800.5
Health and Safety Code 115700, et. seq.

How they work...



*W.C. 13801(a)

Types of wells...

Water Wells

Monitoring Wells

Cathodic Protection Wells

Geothermal Heat Exchange Wells

But what about injection wells?

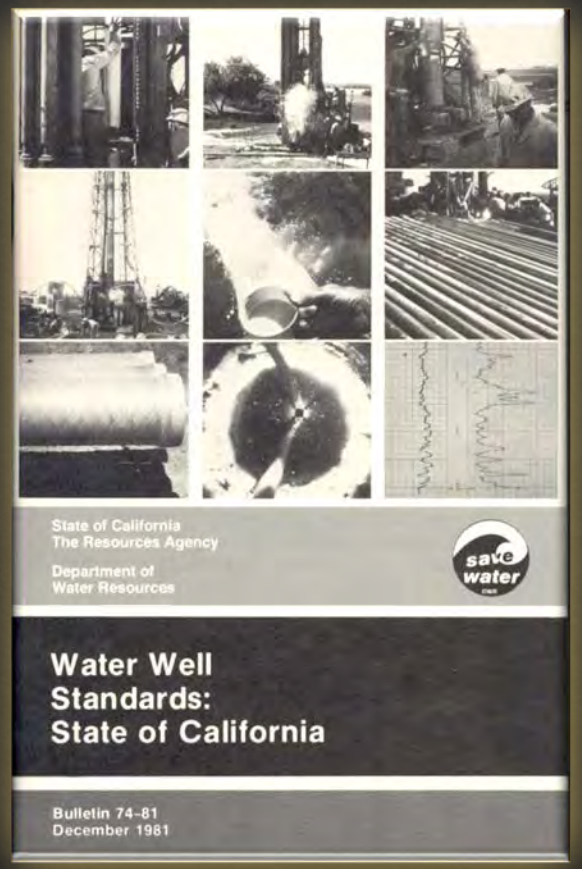
Water Code Section 13710 - "Well" or "water well" as used in this chapter, means any artificial excavation constructed by any method for the purpose of extracting water from, or injecting water into, the underground. This definition shall not include: (a) oil and gas wells, or geothermal wells constructed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation, except those wells converted to use as water wells; or (b) wells used for the purpose of (1) dewatering excavation during construction, or (2) stabilizing hillsides or earth embankments.

Water Code 13801 (e) The minimum standards recommended by the department and adopted by the state board or local agencies for the construction, maintenance, abandonment, or destruction of monitoring wells or class 1 hazardous injection wells shall not be construed to limit, abridge, or supersede the powers or duties of the State Department of Public Health in their application of standards to the construction, maintenance, abandonment, or destruction of monitoring wells or class 1 hazardous injection wells at facilities that treat, store, or dispose of hazardous waste or at any site where the State Department of Public Health is the lead agency responsible for investigation and remedial action at that site, as long as the standards used by the State Department of Public Health meet or exceed those in effect by any city, county, or water agency where appropriate, responsible for developing ordinances for the area in question.

One source of confusion...

"Included are wells used for the injection of reclaimed waste water. Injection wells are also used to dispose of unusable waste water into formations containing water of unusable quality (such as highly mineralized waters) or dry, nonproductive formations. These latter wells can penetrate usable ground water zones but are not permitted to open into usable water (Chapter 7, Division 7, California Water Code; Section 4458, California Health and Safety Code; and Chapter 1, Division 3, California Public Resources Code.) "Dry" wells, "drainage" wells, and sewer wells also fall into this category. Their existence and operation is also subject to the aforementioned provisions of the State law."

- DWR Bulletin 74-81 - Page 24 (footnote)



Key considerations...

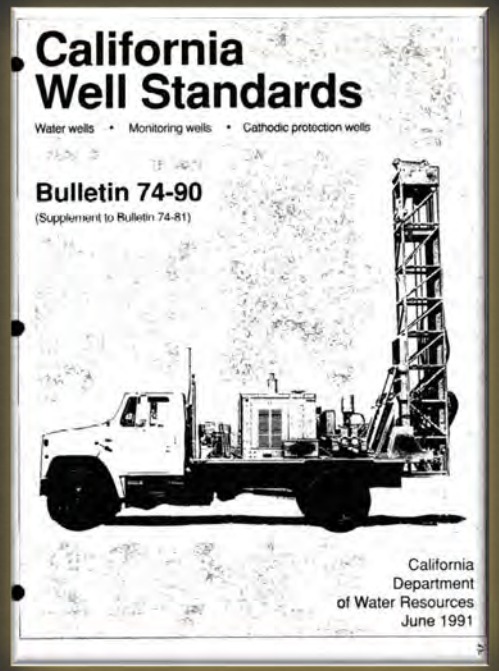
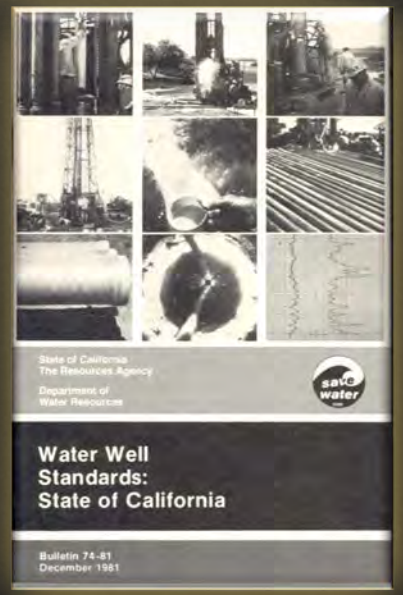
Purposeful and managed injection of surface water into groundwater that is protective of groundwater quality

versus…

Uncontrolled entry of surface water into groundwater that poses a threat to groundwater quality

Some additional issues...

California's well standards need to be updated

Bulletin 74-81 is 37 years old
Bulletin 74-90 is <u>still</u> a draft after 27 years
They don't adequately address injection wells
(+ many other shortcomings)

DWR hasn't had an active well standards program for a very long time (lack of resources)