ULARA Watershed Boundary and groundwater basin shapefiles

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Conversation with Anthony Hicke

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Mr. Hicke emailed Miriam a ULARA watershed boundary. The watershed boundary file is the equivalent of the watermaster boundary for ULARA. The watershed is the entirety of the surface area, including the hills and rocky areas in which all water (precip, runoff, etc) there belongs to the City of Los Angeles as part of their Pueblo Rights. The watershed boundary does delineate the 4 adjudicated basins in ULARA.

The ULARA gwbasins shapefile contains records for the 4 groundwater basins with adjudicated water rights: Eagle Rock, San Fernando, Sylmar, and Verdugo. There are geological and hydrologic reasons why they’re divided. The territory of the basin boundary file is smaller in area than the watershed boundary area. This is because the watershed boundary includes “hills and rocky area” where water that falls there belongs to the City of Los Angeles. As explained by ULARA:

“On May 12, 1975, the California Supreme Court filed its opinion on the 20-year San Fernando Valley water litigation. This opinion, which became final on August 1, 1975, upheld the Pueblo Water Right of the City of Los Angeles to all groundwater in the SFB derived from precipitation within ULARA. The City of Los Angeles' Pueblo Water Right was not allowed to extend to the groundwaters of the Sylmar and Verdugo Basins. However, all surface and groundwater underflows from these basins are part of Los Angeles’ Pueblo Water Right.

In addition, the City of Los Angeles was given a right to all SFB groundwater derived from “return water” imported by it from outside ULARA and either spread or delivered within the SFB. The Cities of Glendale and Burbank were also given rights to all SFB groundwater derived from “return water” that each imports from outside ULARA and delivered within ULARA. San Fernando was not a member of MWD until the end of 1971, and had never prior thereto imported any water from outside ULARA. Therefore, San Fernando has no right to capture “return water” in the SFB.” <http://www.ularawatermaster.com/>

Thus, there’s the watershed boundary which includes area where precip water belongs to the City of LA, and the groundwater basins which are monitored for return water withdrawals.