The Emmett Center on Climate Change and the Environment has released its latest Pritzker Environmental Law and Policy Brief, "*Allocating Under Water: Reforming California's Groundwater Adjudications*."

California leads the nation in groundwater extraction, but it lags behind in updating groundwater-related laws and regulations. As a result, protracted litigation clogs the courts and often fails to protect water resources. *Allocating Under Water* identifies key reforms aimed at streamlining the efficiency of the judicial process and protecting groundwater as a public resource.

"In an average year, groundwater makes up 30 percent of California's total water supply. Absent state regulation and permitting of groundwater rights, the main recourse for disputes over the use of that groundwater is with the courts," said report author (and former Legal Planeteer) M. Rhead Enion, UCLA's 2010-13 Emmett/Frankel Fellow in Environmental Law and Policy. "Judicial adjudications are hardly a model of water management efficiency, but California legislators have shown little inclination to impose comprehensive state groundwater management. These recommendations attempt to make groundwater adjudication more legally and economically efficient while still protecting groundwater and the environment."

In "Allocating Under Water," Rhead starts with an overarching goal for reforms: facilitating the market-based exchange of water rights within an adjudicated basin while protecting the environmental integrity of the basin. Specific recommendations include establishing a specialized water court in California to handle all water litigation; using transferable entitlement and allocation shares in adjudicated basins to boost efficiency; and providing more flexibility for the watermaster to regulate groundwater production and storage.

The brief is a follow-up to Under Water: Monitoring and Regulating Groundwater in California, also written by Rhead, which tackled groundwater management more generally.

The Pritzker Environmental Law and Policy Briefs are published by UCLA School of Law in conjunction with researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines as well as the broader environmental law community. The papers provide expert analysis to engage further public dialogue on important issues impacting the environment.