

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL
AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

SPECIAL MEETING

City/County Library – 1st Floor Conference Room
995 Palm Street
San Luis Obispo

Wednesday, August 26, 2009
1:30 p.m.

1. **Introductions and Determination of a Quorum**
2. **Ongoing Updates**
 - a. **San Miguel Ranch Final EIR – Planning Commission Study Session 5 pm
August 27, 2009**
3. **Conservation and Open Space Element**

--- Adjourn by 2:30 pm ---

Next Regular Meeting: **September 2, 2009 1:30 pm**
 San Luis Obispo City/County Library
 995 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo

Visit Water Resources on the Web at: www.slocountywater.org

Purpose of the Committee:

To advise the County Board of Supervisors concerning all policy decisions relating to the water resources of the SLO County Flood Control & Water Conservation District. To recommend to the Board specific water resource programs. To recommend methods of financing water resource programs.

Excerpts from WRAC By-Laws dated March, 6, 2007

WRAC Subcommittee on the Water Element of the COSE

August 26, 2009

Members: Michael Winn, Ray Allen, Betty Winholtz, Sue Harvey

Comments follow:

Generally we agreed that the new format and principles articulated are good, but the policies need more detail, especially re implementation.

The subcommittee has come to believe that some of our earlier comments (e.g., need for stream gauge data, environmental water metrics, separate reports per each watershed) would be better placed in the Master Water Plan instead of the COSE. Others not repeated here are due to their being more like projects instead of planning policies.

General Comments from Members on July 1, 2009:

Clearly define “imported water”, “supplemental water”, and “surface water”.

Develop an implementation plan in order to clearly understand how strategies would be implemented.

Be cognizant of policies/implementation strategies which would result in “government crippling government”, i.e. unfunded mandates (this was mentioned regarding Implementation Strategy WR 3.1.6).

p. 10.1

Introduction

2nd ¶, 2nd sentence: Most areas of the county are experiencing groundwater problems. Many have declining water supply and water quality due in part to a lack of available surface water supplies, inconsistent recharge, and previous development permitted without adequate sustainable water supply.

p. 10.3

[The quotation by Zekster is only partially adequate. What someone should have said is more like:

The safe yield of groundwater is exceeded when long-term groundwater extraction exceeds aquifer recharge, producing declining trends in aquifer storage. Overdraft may be

evidenced by declines in surface-water levels and stream flow, reduction or elimination of vegetation, land subsidence, decline in groundwater quality, and/or seawater intrusion.

Water Quality [Add a third bullet]

-
-
- Self-regenerating water softeners using salts of various types pose a serious threat to the quality of the county’s groundwater supplied.

p. 10.5

Table WR-1

GOALS FOR WATER RESOURCES

Goal WR 2 The County will manage groundwater resources in each watershed to ensure sustainable supplies for all beneficial uses.

...

Goal WR 4 Per capita potable use in the county will decline significantly by 2020, correlated with the Levels of Severity outlined in the County Resource Management System..

Chapter 10 WATER RESOURCES

[There is a need for contextual history beyond administration and regulation, either here and/or in the Water Resources Appendices. Issues critical to water policy include the county being a long-term semi-arid region, frequency of droughts, cyclical nature of rainfall (with averages), and interrelationship between the long-term trends in rainfall and those in population (both growth rate and total population).]

[A map of the county is needed here, showing the various watersheds, with an overlay showing areas currently experiencing seawater intrusion and/or having a Level of Severity III for water supply.]

p. 10.5

Implementation Strategy WR 1.1.1 Implement an Expanded Water Master Plan

- c. Establish a water demand monitoring program in coordination with the County Planning Department's Resource Management System and the County Public Works' Master Water Plan to monitor municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and environmental demand on an ongoing basis;

p. 10.6

Policy WR 1.3 New Water Supply

Development of new water supplies should focus first on efficient use of our existing resources. Use of reclaimed water, interagency cooperative projects, and groundwater recharge projects should be considered prior to using imported sources of water or seawater desalination.

- ◇ Implementation Strategy 1.3.1 Work in concert with the DWR and other regulatory agencies to stay current with approved methods of facilitating desalination projects for the county's coastal communities. (See WR 1.15)

- ◇ **[Retain] Implementation Strategy WR 1.2.1**

Monitor and explore new technologies that lower the cost of desalination.

Policy WR 1.7 Water-dependent species

[spelling error]

- **Implementation Strategy WR 1.6.1 Evaluate ecosystem water needs.**
[spelling error]

Policy WR 1.7 Agricultural operations

- ◇ Implementation Strategy 1.7.1 Discontinue Ag Cluster subdivisions as a planning tool.
- ◇ Implementation Strategy 1.7.2 Support no annexations and allow no residential subdivisions or (if the ordinance is retained) ag cluster subdivisions on land zoned AG or zoned RL or RR with a history of farming, unless they are supplied by supplemental water. (I.e., do not permit residential development outside of UURLs or VURLs that draw on groundwater.)

Policy WR 1.9 Limit and regulate new water systems

Policy WR 1.11 Reduce RMS alert levels

[Add:

- ◇ Implementation Strategy WR 1.11.2 Planning Area Standards
Adopt planning area standards for all areas with an RMS Level of Severity for Water I, II, or III. [Use or adapt the standards developed by County Planning for the Nipomo Mesa Water Conservation Area.]

p. 10.10

Policy WR 1.12 Impacts of new development

Accurately assess and mitigate the impacts of new development on water supply. (GM1) At a minimum, comply with the provisions of Senate Bills 610 and 211 and Assembly Bills 32 and 49.

Policy WR 1.12 Density increases in rural areas

Do not approve General Plan amendments or land divisions, or support LAFCO annexations that increase the density or intensity of non-agricultural uses in rural areas that have a recommended or certified Level of Severity II or III for water supply until a Level of Severity I or better is reached.

[Delete the last clause, or this becomes unenforceable and relatively meaningless.]

p. 10.11

Goal Number 2: The County will work with other agencies and stakeholders to manage groundwater resources to ensure sustainable supplies for all beneficial uses.

p. 10.12

□ Implementation Strategy WR 2.2.3

Secure right of access to all new key wells together with retaining voluntary access to existing wells having useful histories to ensure that the County's investment in these records is protected. The County should obtain permission from each new well owner to obtain groundwater data for use by the County. (GM2)

Policy WR 2.3 Well permits

[New:

◇ Implementation Strategy 2.3.2: Permit no new residential wells serving more than one household where groundwater is LOS II or III, unless it is to replace an existing well that will be legally abandoned.

p. 10.13

GOAL 3: EXCELLENT WATER QUALITY WILL BE MAINTAINED FOR THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE AND NATURAL COMMUNITIES.

[New: Implementation Strategy WR 3.1.5 Gradual elimination of self-regenerating water softeners that discharge salts and implementation of a tracking program for exchange tank system salts disposal. Recognize the real impacts of self-regenerating water softeners on the County's ability to effectively treat and use reclaimed water. Amend ordinance to stop permitting new installations and to gradually eliminate existing equipment everywhere in the county, with the exception of the canister exchange type.

[New: Implementation Strategy WR 3.1.6 Tertiary Treatment of Waste Water

The County shall encourage community waste water systems to convert to tertiary treatment, with no permits for new or upgraded community facilities that are not tertiary treated or moving towards it as the end goal.

Policy WR 3.2 Protect watersheds

Protect watersheds, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas, and natural drainage systems from potential adverse impacts of development projects. (GM1)

- This policy should identify the watersheds, groundwater, aquifer recharge areas, and natural drainage systems, possibly with maps.
- Add language to end of policy "... adverse impacts of development **and public infrastructure** projects."

p. 10.18

Policy WR 3.5 Support Resource Conservation Districts

Continue support of and partnerships with Resource Conservation Districts to encourage education and technical assistance regarding erosion and sediment control in agricultural practices.

p. 10.19

[New:

◇ Implementation Strategy 4.1.5: Encourage water purveyors to reduce water use.

p. 10.20

Policy WR 4.2 Water pricing structures

Support water-pricing structures to encourage conservation by all water users (WRM8) and will seek to expand the use of conservation rate structures in the entire county, particularly in areas with Levels of Severity II and III for water supply.

[Add: Implementation Strategy WR 4.2.2 Agencies to lead by example School districts and other governmental agencies shall monitor their water use on a monthly basis and report annually to the County Department of Public Health.

Implementation Strategy WR 4.3.3

Reduce indoor and outdoor use of water in County-owned, -operated, or -financed facilities through efficient technologies, design and management practices, and other conservation efforts, for example, County library branches, parks, sports parks paid in part by County moneys, and County golf courses.

Policy WR 4.4 Reuse water

- Add Implementation Strategy:
Encourage and, where possible, mandate tertiary treatment of all wastewater, excluding wastewater handled by private septic systems.
- Add Implementation Strategy:
Begin and sustain a long-term effort to educate the public about the science, the health safety, and the necessity of recycling treated waste water for human consumption. Use of such water for playgrounds and parks, landscape vegetation, and food crops may be intermediate applications; but we must embrace the long-term necessity of using it for drinking water.

p. 10.21

Policy WR 4.6 Graywater [N.B. This section has very serious public health implications that must be thoroughly analyzed before the County changes its policies.

[New:

◇ Implementation Strategy 4.6.2: Develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the public education process.

[Comments:

Graywater use is problematic. Though some graywater enthusiasts champion the cause uncritically, there are serious health concerns that cannot be ignored if this use is to be adopted by the County.

- Some uses of “graywater” are justified, and no water should be wasted if it can be avoided.
- However, the County must require the most stringent public health policies regarding the use of graywater.
 - Will the County help fund the legal defense of contractors and developers who are sued by persons who suffer from health impacts from graywater contact?
 - Is County Counsel prepared to defend the Planning Department and the County in general in similar litigation?
 - Bluntly: People will pee while taking a shower. Other sources of “graywater” can be similarly compromised by diapers etc. Where would a “graywater system” deposit such water without exposing gardeners, indoor/outdoor pets, and playing children to disease?
- Implementation should include a long-term education effort to build support for the limited uses that are consistent with the State and Federal Health Codes.]

p. 10.22

Policy WR 5.1 Watershed approach

The County will consider entire watersheds and groundwater basins, including those that extend across county lines, in its approach to managing water resources, including ecological values and economic factors in water resources development. (WRM1 revised)

Implementation Strategy WR 5.1.1

Support development and implementation of watershed management plans for all key watersheds in the county, including those that cross county lines, in collaboration with resource conservation districts, water purveyors, cities, and landowners. Watershed management plans should incorporate the information contained in the County’s Source Water Assessments (SWAs) and Watershed Sanitary Surveys (WSSs), and should also include:

p. 10.23

Policy WR 5.6 Cumulative impacts to watersheds

Identify mitigation strategies or programs at the watershed, groundwater basin level, or a portion thereof that address cumulative impacts within watersheds, groundwater basins or in portions of watersheds or groundwater basins in coordination with cities and watershed managers, and, where applicable, adjoining counties.

p. 10.23

Policy WR 5.7

- Errata: Replace “affects” with “effects” in subsections 2) and 4); renumber second 5) at the top of the next page to 6).

p. 10.25

Table WR 2

- “Planning Area” need to be replaced by “Watershed”.
- Adelaida: The watersheds need to be correctly delineated. Some “Site Names” belong in other watersheds. Adelaida is in two watersheds.
- Huasna-Lopez incorrectly includes Twitchell Dam and the Cuyama River.
- Erratum: “Las Pilitas” is the correct spelling.
- North Coast designation does not respect separate watersheds. Each creek named is a separate watershed.
- South County Coastal and South County Inland are in the same groundwater basin and same watershed, but Nipomo Creek and its tributaries are only in the Inland portion.

p. 10.28

Add new Implementation Strategy 6.5.3 Recording retention and detention basins

Require that each retention or detention basin on new construction be mapped and recorded on their title, with the County to monitor their maintenance no less frequently than every 3 years.

Appendix 10

Appendix 10.1 Setting

Comments:

- This section contains good administrative and regulatory information but lacks essential information about historic rainfall and drought patterns. The information given is useful, but the physical context is also needed.

- This section would benefit from a graph of 30 years of rainfall and population figures for each watershed.

p. 10.12-14

Appendix 10 WPA Table A10-2

- This table should include “Riparian Demand”, which is an essential inclusion, as in the County’s Water Planning Area (WPA) reports. Also, a map that delineated the boundaries of Water Planning Areas would be important. The Water Planning Areas usually coincide with an underlying aquifer. Also, the table should add population numbers so per capita usage can be compared and information on the number of acres the agriculture use represents.

Riparian Demands may not be completed for this update, but the WRAC suggests a three-step plan for bringing the Master Water Plan into compliance by the next update:

- 1) Report as much data from all stream gauges countywide that have records.
- 2) Make a list of all significant areas that do not have stream gauges or data collected and that should.
- 3) Formulate and commit to a 5-year schedule for placing stream gauges in streams that should have them. [Critical stream data can take years to accumulate and data become really useful after 5-10 years, so we must begin as soon as possible.]

When the COSE is updated next (in 5 years?), more complete data should then be available.

Appendix 10.11

- Level of Severity projections in years need to be extended in response to real timetables that current projects require. Suggested changes:
 - o Level of Severity I: When projected demand over the next 9 [change to 15] years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply.
 - o Level of Severity II: When projected water demand over the next 7 [change to 10] years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply.
 - o Level of Severity III: When projected water demand equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply.