



May 18, 2022

**TO:** LOCSD Utilities Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Ron Munds, General Manager

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item 4 - 05/18/2022 Utilities Advisory Committee Meeting**  
Basin Management Committee (BMC) Update

**President**  
Matthew D. Fourcroy

**Vice President**  
Charles L. Cesena

**Directors**  
Troy C. Gatchell  
Marshall E. Ochylski  
Christine M. Womack

**General Manager**  
Ron Munds

**District Accountant**  
Robert Stilts, CPA

**Unit Chief**  
Eddy Moore

**Battalion Chief**  
Paul Provence

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

***Receive information update regarding the May 18, 2022 BMC meeting***

**DISCUSSION**

Staff will provide an update of the following topics from the BMC meeting agenda:

**Draft 2021 Annual Monitoring Report**

Attached to this report is the Executive Summary of the draft 2021 BMC Annual Monitoring Report. The complete report can be found on the District's website at [losososcsd.org](http://losososcsd.org).

**Coastal Commission/SLO County Correspondence on New Development**

Also attached to this report are the letters from the Coastal Commission to SLO County and the responding letter from SLO County to the Coastal Commission.

**Attachments**

Draft Executive Summary of the BMC Annual Monitoring Report  
Coastal Commission correspondence  
SLO County correspondence

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Los Osos Basin Plan Groundwater Monitoring Program - 2021 Annual Report (Annual Report) describes activities related to the Los Osos Basin Plan (LOBP) Groundwater Monitoring Program, and provides results and interpretation of these activities for calendar year 2021. The LOBP Groundwater Monitoring Program is necessary to accomplish the following continuing goals set forth in Section 2.4 of the LOBP (ISJ Group, 2015):

1. Provide for a continuously updated hydrologic assessment of the Los Osos Groundwater Basin (Basin), its water resources and sustainable yield.
2. Create a water resource accounting which is able to meet the information needs for planning, monitoring, trading, environmental management, utility operations, land development and agricultural operations.

The LOBP Groundwater Monitoring Program is also necessary to support other goals of the LOBP, including prevention of seawater intrusion, establishing a long-term environmentally and economically sustainable and beneficial use of the Basin, and the equitable allocation of costs associated with Basin management.

**Groundwater Production**

Groundwater production for calendar year 2021 is summarized in Table ES-1 below. Purveyor (Los Osos Community Services District, Golden State Water Company, and S&T Mutual Water Company) production has decreased by three percent compared to 2020, while total Basin production has decreased by less than one percent compared to 2020.

<b>Table ES-1. Groundwater Production</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>2020 Production in Acre-Feet</b>	<b>2021 Production in Acre-Feet</b>
Los Osos Community Services District	527	503
Golden State Water Company	502	491
S&T Mutual Water Company	34	32
<b>Purveyor Subtotal (metered)</b>	<b>1,063</b>	<b>1,026</b>
Domestic wells <sup>1</sup>	220	220
Community facilities <sup>1</sup>	80	130
Agricultural wells <sup>1</sup>	650	620
<b>Total Estimated Production<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>2,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> Rounded to the nearest 10 acre-feet. Production from non-metered wells (Domestic, Community, Agricultural) estimated per methods described in Appendix H and LOBP Section 4 and Section 7.5.



## **Basin Status**

The status of the Basin in terms of key parameters and metrics are listed below, along with the page reference for definitions and additional details on each key parameter:

**Precipitation (p. 43).** The Basin received below average rainfall in 2021. The drought condition for San Luis Obispo County ranged from moderate drought to extreme drought conditions during 2021 (NDMC/USDA/NOAA, 2022).

**Seawater intrusion front (p. 58).** The seawater intrusion front in Zone D retreated toward the coast between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 (an improvement). The seawater intrusion front in Zone E advanced toward LA11 between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 (a deterioration).

**Basin Yield Metric (p. 67).** The Basin Yield Metric decreased between 2020 and 2021 (an improvement) and has met the LOBP goal since 2016, although an updated Sustainable Yield methodology to be implemented in 2022 is expected to result in the Basin Yield Metric not meeting the LOBP goal (discussed in Section 7.5.1).

**Water Level Metric (p. 71).** The Water Level Metric increased between Spring 2020 and Spring 2021 (an improvement) and has not reached the target value.

**Chloride Metric (p. 73).** The Chloride Metric decreased between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 (an improvement) and has not reached the target value.

**Nitrate Metric (p. 74).** The Nitrate Metric decreased between Winter 2020 and Winter 2021 (an improvement) and has not reached the target value.

**Upper Aquifer Water Level Profile (p. 76).** Water levels in the Upper Aquifer along the bay remain safely above the Protective Elevation.

Recommendations for improving the quality and availability of data are contained in Section 9 of the Annual Report. The recommendations include updating the Maximum Sustainable Yield (sustainable yield with all LOBP projects implemented) of the Basin and replacing the steady-state Basin model with a transient model.

## **LOBP Metrics**

As described in Section 7.5 (“Basin Metrics”) of this Annual Report, the LOBP established several Basin metrics to evaluate nitrate impacts to the Upper Aquifer, seawater intrusion into the Lower Aquifer, and the effect of management efforts of the Basin Management Committee (BMC). These metrics allow the BMC, regulatory agencies, and the public to evaluate the status of nitrate levels and seawater intrusion, and the impact of implementation of the LOBP programs in the Basin through objective, numerical criteria that can be tracked over time. The status of key Basin metrics is summarized in Table ES-2.



<b>Table ES-2. LOBP Metric Summary</b>			
<b>Metric</b>	<b>LOBP Goal</b>	<b>Calculated Value from 2021 Data</b>	<b>Change in Condition from 2020</b>
<b>Basin Yield Metric*</b>	80 or less	72	Decrease (improvement)
<b>Water Level Metric</b>	8 feet above mean sea level or higher	2.1 feet above mean sea level	Increase (improvement)
<b>Chloride Metric</b>	100 mg/L or lower	202 mg/L	Decrease (improvement)
<b>Nitrate Metric</b>	10 mg/L or lower	17 mg/L (NO <sub>3</sub> -N)	Decreased (improvement)

\*On October 27, 2021, the BMC considered and adopted a revised methodology for estimating sustainable yield, along with a sustainable yield for Year 2022 that will likely increase the Basin Yield Metric to a value above the LOBP goal. See Appendix M for additional details.

### **Adaptive Management Program**

In addition to the programs described in the LOBP, the following additional measures are recommended in the context of adaptive management. Details regarding each program are provided in Section 10 of this Annual Report.

- Lower Aquifer Monitoring Evaluation
- Updated Metric Evaluation
- Contingency Plan Development
- Lower Aquifer Nitrate Trends
- Evaluation of Water Conservation Measures
- Transient Groundwater Model
- Discussion and Recommendation of Criteria for Future Growth



**LOBP Infrastructure Programs**

The status of LOBP infrastructure programs is summarized Table ES- 3.

<b>Table ES-3. Basin Infrastructure Projects</b>				
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Parties Involved</b>	<b>Funding Status</b>	<b>Capital Cost</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Program A</b>				
Water Systems Interconnection	LOCSD/ GSWC			Completed
Upper Aquifer Well (8 <sup>th</sup> Street)	LOCSD	Fully Funded	\$320,000	The piping and other improvements for the wellhead are complete. The electronic/control equipment is scheduled to be delivered the week of May 9th. Completion of the project is anticipated by the end of May 2022.
South Bay Well Nitrate Removal	LOCSD			Completed
Palisades Well Modifications	LOCSD			Completed
Blending Project (Skyline Well)	GSWC			Completed
Water Meters	S&T			Completed
<b>Program B</b>				
LOCSD Wells	LOCSD	Not Funded	BMP: \$2.7 mil	Project not initiated
GSWC Wells	GSWC	Not Funded	BMP: \$3.2 mil	Project not initiated
Community Nitrate Removal Facility	LOCSD/GSWC/S&T	GSWC Portion Funded	GSWC: \$1.23 mil	GSWC's Program A Blending Project might be capable of expanding to be the first phase of the Program B Community Nitrate Removal Facility.



<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Parties Involved</b>	<b>Funding Status</b>	<b>Capital Cost</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Program C</b>				
Expansion Well No. 1 (Los Olivos)	GSWC			Completed
Expansion Well No. 2	LOCSD	LOCSD	BMP: \$2.0 mil	LOCSD is in the process of obtaining bids for the well drilling phase. The submittal deadline is May 9th. It is anticipated that the drilling of the well will begin by June/July 2022.
Expansion Well 3 and LOVR Water Main Upgrade	GSWC/LOCSD	Cooperative Funding	BMP: \$1.6 mil	This project has been deferred under Adaptive Management.
LOVR Water Main Upgrade	GSWC	May be deferred	BMP: \$1.53 mil	Project may not be required, depending on the pumping capacity of the drilled Program C wells. It may be deferred to Program D.
S&T/GSWC Interconnection	S&T/ GSWC	Pending	BMP: \$30,000	Currently on hold pending further evaluation of the project.



Project Name	Parties Involved	Funding Status	Capital Cost	Status
<b>Program M</b>				
New Zone D/E Lower Aquifer monitoring well in Cuesta by the Sea	All Parties			Completed
<b>Program U</b>				
Creek Discharge Program	All Parties		TBD	These activities are currently on hold. The Transient Model and Water Recycling Funding Study are intended to better inform the BMC on the most effective opportunities for increasing the sustainable yield of the Basin.
8th and El Moro Urban Storm Water Recovery Project	All Parties		TBD	These activities are currently on hold. The Transient Model and Water Recycling Funding Study are intended to better inform the BMC on the most effective opportunities for increasing the sustainable yield of the Basin.



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & BUILDING**  
**TREVOR KEITH, *DIRECTOR***

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**MEMO**

DATE: April 29, 2022  
TO: Interested Parties  
FROM: Department of Planning and Building  
SUBJECT: Permitted Development in Los Osos

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify and affirm how the County Department of Planning and Building (Department) applies the County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) to development in Los Osos, considering recent correspondence from Coastal Commission staff. While the Department will continue to accept applications for specific development types in Los Osos (as explained in this memorandum), applicants are advised that the Coastal Commission retains appeal jurisdiction in certain areas and over certain development types in Los Osos. As such, the Department encourages applicants for development projects in Los Osos to review and consider the attached Coastal Commission staff letter and conduct due diligence prior to applying for a permit for development in Los Osos.

In a letter dated April 19, 2022, Coastal Commission staff asked the Department to "...not accept any CDP (coastal development permit) applications for filing that cannot demonstrate that they have legal access to both a sustainable water source and wastewater treatment services." The letter goes on to state that this requirement cannot be met for any new development that would increase water demand on the Los Osos Groundwater Basin and because undeveloped lots are prohibited from connecting to the Los Osos Wastewater Recycling Facility (LOWRF) until appropriate and sustainable buildout limits for Los Osos and any mechanisms to stay within such limits are identified as part of the Los Osos Community Plan.

Department staff has conducted an initial review of the recent concerns raised by Coastal Commission staff and, considering these concerns, examined the relevant provisions of the County's LCP as well as the Department's permitting practices for development in Los Osos. As described below, based on Department staff's preliminary review, the Department's current permitting practice is consistent with the County's LCP, as certified by the Coastal Commission, and ensures that the limited new development allowed in Los Osos will have a neutral to positive effect on the Los Osos Groundwater Basin. As such, while the Department continues to review and coordinate with Coastal Commission staff regarding their concerns and how best to address them in light of the current LCP provisions and pending Los Osos Community Plan, the Department does not currently intend to implement any interim changes to how it processes applications for development in Los Osos under the County's LCP.

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The Department will continue to **not** accept applications for the following development types in Los Osos:

- *New development on undeveloped lots in the Los Osos Sewer Service Area*

The Department will continue to prohibit all new development on undeveloped lots in the Los Osos Sewer Service Area, in accordance with the County's Growth Management Ordinance and conditions of the LOWRF coastal development permit (CDP), until appropriate and sustainable buildout limits for this area and any mechanisms to stay within such limits are identified as part of the Los Osos Community Plan.

- *Accessory dwelling unit (ADU) development in Los Osos*

On May 17, 2022, the County Board of Supervisors will consider the Coastal Commission's suggested modifications that would prohibit ADU development in Los Osos and Cambria. Based on the Coastal Commission's suggested modifications, the County is currently not accepting permit applications for ADUs in Los Osos.

The Department will continue to accept applications for the following development types in Los Osos, subject to the County's water offset requirement and/or water fixture retrofit requirement:

- *New residential additions, remodels, guesthouses, and other water-neutral development / land uses on lots with existing single-family dwellings within the Los Osos Sewer Service Area*

The Department will continue to accept permit applications for new residential additions, remodels, and guesthouses on developed lots within the Los Osos Sewer Service Area. In addition to compliance with current requirements of the California Green Building Standards and Department of Water Resources, additions and remodels may be required to replace plumbing fixtures for the entire structure. The Department will also continue to process applications for other types of allowed development / land uses within the Los Osos Sewer Service Area, provided they are located on a developed lot and do not increase water demand onsite.

- *New residential development (except ADUs) on undeveloped and developed lots outside of the Los Osos Sewer Service Area*

The Department will continue to accept permit applications for new residential development (except ADUs) on undeveloped and developed lots outside of the Los Osos Sewer Service Area. New dwellings (only allowed outside of the Los Osos Sewer Service Area) are required to retrofit plumbing fixtures in existing structures within the Los Osos Groundwater Basin area to achieve water savings at a ratio of two to one.

The Department appreciates and shares the Coastal Commission's concerns regarding groundwater sustainability in Los Osos. County staff continues to coordinate with Coastal Commission staff regarding their ongoing review of the County's proposed LCP amendment, the Los Osos Community Plan, which

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proposes to (a) reduce potential buildout, (b) tie future buildout to infrastructure improvements, and (c) attempts to bring several regulatory layers into harmony for the long-term benefit of County residents and important coastal resources, including ongoing implementation of the Los Osos Groundwater Basin Plan and oversight by the Basin Management Committee, obtaining final approval of and implementing the Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan, and strengthening the County's water conservation program in Los Osos with updated retrofit calculations and remaining conservation capacity.

The Department will provide further public updates should there be any changes in permitting procedures in Los Osos, including after further review and coordination with Coastal Commission staff.

For questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Cory Hanh, Senior Planner, at [chanh@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:chanh@co.slo.ca.us) or 805-781-5710.

Attachment:

1. California Coastal Commission Letter Regarding Development in Los Osos, dated April 19, 2022

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT  
725 FRONT STREET, SUITE 300  
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060  
PHONE: (831) 427-4863  
FAX: (831) 427-4877  
WEB: WWW.COASTAL.CA.GOV

**April 19, 2022**

Trevor Keith, Director  
San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building  
976 Osos Street, Room 200  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

**Subject: New Development in Los Osos**

Dear Mr. Keith:

The purpose of this letter is to highlight issues of mutual concern as they relate to proposed development in the community of Los Osos. As the County is well aware, including from the County's designation of an LCP Resource Management System Alert Level III for water supply (i.e., where demand exceeds existing supply, and still does) and from the 2015 designation by the California Department of Water Resources of the Los Osos Valley Groundwater Basin as a high priority basin due to its "condition of critical overdraft", there is insufficient water supply to serve even existing development in Los Osos without coastal resource harm (including where an over-drafted groundwater basin can adversely impact sensitive natural resources such as wetlands and marshes, coastal streams and adjacent riparian areas, and marine habitats, as well as adversely impact coastal priority uses such as agriculture and lower-cost visitor-serving development), let alone adding to it new water using development. In addition, much of Los Osos is considered environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) by the LCP within which most development, including residential development, is prohibited. This alone trips up most all residential development in Los Osos at varying levels. And finally, the County's wastewater treatment plant is prohibited from providing wastewater service to anything but existing development (and not to new development on existing lots)<sup>1</sup> unless and until the Estero Area Plan is amended to "identify appropriate and sustainable buildout limits, and any appropriate mechanisms to stay within such limits, based on conclusive evidence indicating that adequate water is available to support development of such properties without adverse impacts to ground and surface waters, including wetlands and all related habitats" as required by the Commission in Special

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<sup>1</sup> As we have previously noted, the County is prohibited by CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 from providing wastewater services to new development on vacant lots, and that prohibition extends to intensifications of use. Specifically, the Commission has found that the CDP's prohibition on new wastewater service does not only apply to new development on completely vacant parcels, but also to projects that include significant intensifications of use and significant expansions on already-developed properties. The Commission has verified this understanding in multiple Los Osos appeal cases (see adopted findings for A-3-SLO-19-0180 (Shear Development LLC SFDs), A-3-SLO-21-0005 (Kimbell Second Unit), A-3-SLO-21-0004 (Wise Second Unit), A-3-SLO-21-0007 (Bodine Second Unit), and A-3-SLO-21-0008 (Robertson Second Unit)). In short, the County is prohibited by the CDP from providing wastewater services to such development, including intensifications of use, and if the County were to provide such services, the County would be in violation of that CDP and subject to potential Commission enforcement action.

## **New development in Los Osos**

Condition 6 of CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069. We are currently reviewing the Los Osos Community Plan that the County has submitted for this purpose and hope to bring that to hearing and Commission action by this summer. In the meantime, and with the goal of avoiding any additional appeals of County CDP actions in Los Osos and ultimately better protecting the Los Osos Groundwater Basin and related resources, we have the following observations and suggestions for the County.

First, please do not accept any CDP applications for filing that cannot demonstrate that they have legal access to both a sustainable water source and wastewater treatment services. To be clear, such applications should not be accepted for review unless and until such water and wastewater is available for use, as availability of these public services reflects a fundamental prerequisite for considering proposed development and must be considered at the filing stage. On this point, we do not believe that a will serve from a local water purveyor satisfies LCP and CDP requirements, including as the LCP finding that is required on this point is not for water purveyors to make, rather it is the County's independent responsibility. To this point, recent Commission's adopted findings on this issue state:<sup>2</sup>

*The County, as the initial CDP decision-making body for CDP applications that include new water use in Cambria [same as Los Osos], needs to consider these perhaps inconvenient facts, and stop approving or even considering such projects unless and until measurable steps are taken that improve water supply issues in Cambria [same as Los Osos]. The County should not be even accepting applications for development in Cambria [same as Los Osos] that cannot show evidence of an adequate water supply. A will-serve letter does not provide such evidence, and the County under the LCP is required to make its own finding that an adequate water supply is available to serve a proposed development, and cannot abrogate that responsibility to the CCSD [or here in Los Osos to any of the water purveyors]. The County is giving applicants a sense of 'false hope' when it does, and is doing a disservice to these applicants and the broader community. It is also leading to a significant number of appeals to, and subsequent CDP denials by, the Commission, each of which require an expenditure of scarce public resources to process.*

Unless development can meet the water and wastewater tests above, please do not make any CDP decisions where water supply, wastewater access, and ESHA are issues unless and until the LCP's Estero Area Plan is updated (via the pending Los Osos Community Plan) and those changes are certified by the Coastal Commission. Importantly, those LCP changes are at their core required to provide direction on sustainable growth and buildout in Los Osos as it is affected by these constraints, and it is not appropriate to be making CDP decisions that aren't based in that sort of assessment. As is, Los Osos-area water purveyors are raising their own questions about the sustainability of the Los Osos Groundwater Basin to serve development, and sustainable buildout has not been determined and certified into the LCP, including as it relates to ESHA (and the USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan that is currently in draft

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<sup>2</sup> See adopted Commission findings at <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2022/3/F15b/F15b-3-2022-report.pdf>.

## **New development in Los Osos**

form and still under development). In fact, the Commission has repeatedly determined that LCP consistency cannot be found for any new water using development in Los Osos at the current time, irrespective of any will-serve letter, finding most recently that:<sup>3</sup>

*...the LCP includes a series of provisions which require adequate water and wastewater services for new development, yet the community still does not have an adequate water supply at this time, including as evidenced by the Los Osos Basin Plan 2020 report. Until and unless there is conclusive evidence that adequate water services exist, public services remain a constraint to new development in Los Osos under the LCP.*

On this point we would note that in the last few years there have been ten appeals to the Coastal Commission of County CDP approvals for new residential projects in Los Osos. Of those appeals, the Commission took jurisdiction over the CDP applications for five of them (and denied one such application thus far) and five others withdrew their CDP applications after appeal, all for issues having to do with the water supply, wastewater service, and ESHA issues described above. We do not believe it is good planning or good public policy for the County to continue to take in and process CDP applications for projects that lead to an increase in water use on a site, and/or that require County wastewater services that cannot be provided, especially when the outcome is appeal to the Commission. This is exactly the sort of ‘false hope’ that the Commission alludes to in its findings quoted above. We believe that some certainty on these issues will be coming when the Commission considers the County’s proposed Los Osos Community Plan in the near term, and that it is appropriate to wait for that outcome.

In order to provide as much clarity as possible in the meantime, please note that we consider guesthouses, hotel/motel expansions, and large use/structural intensifications associated with existing development to constitute such “new water-using” development. Unless and until conclusive evidence is provided showing that these types of development do not lead to an increase in water use on a given site, we believe that the precautionary principle should be applied, and that CDP applications for such development should not be accepted (because they cannot demonstrate the availability of an adequate and sustainable water source). At the same time we believe that it is likely that small home additions and renovations are not likely to increase water use on a property. Toward this end, we would suggest that an important threshold concept to be applied to the latter such CDP applications is to require applicants to demonstrate, with actual evidence, that the development they propose will not lead to an increase in water use at the site in question.<sup>4</sup> Such an evaluation demands water-use data and

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<sup>3</sup> See recent adopted Commission findings for an appeal of a County CDP decision in Los Osos from November 17, 2021 at <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2021/11/W14a/w14a-11-2021-report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> To be clear, this is different than trying to demonstrate that one can ‘back out’ or ‘offset’ new water use through some sort of offsite mechanisms, and rather is focused on ensuring that the development in question, by itself, will not lead to the need for additional water use at a site.

## **New development in Los Osos**

evidence to support any conclusions drawn, and it will be important to collect such information before any applications are filed.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, in our view brand new water-using development (such as a new single-family dwelling or an ADU) cannot meet LCP water supply tests, and CDP applications for such development should not be accepted for processing nor approved. Similarly, CDP applications for development that increases water use on a site (including explicitly guesthouses, hotel/motel expansions, and large use/structural intensifications (at least until a body of evidence is provided to demonstrate that such development does not actually lead to additional water use on such sites)) should also not be accepted for processing nor approved for similar reasons. We would expect that any County approvals of CDPs for such development are likely to be appealed to the Commission, which would likely lead to the Commission taking CDP jurisdiction or denying such applications, based on past recent cases. And finally, any CDP applications for other development needs to clearly demonstrate that such development will not lead to increased water use on the site in the manner described above. In sum, our intent with these observations is not to suggest that no CDP applications for development in Los Osos be accepted; rather, with respect to water, and in the interim as more community-scale water supply improvements are pursued, we believe it is important that proposed new development (whether on vacant or developed lots) does not exacerbate water supply-related problems.

Further, and with all due respect, please be advised that the terms and conditions of Commission-issued CDPs are enforceable. The County needs to take its continuing obligations, commitments and requirements from CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 more seriously. The Commission has thus far exercised restraint as it has tried to work with the County as it relates to cases where the County has committed to providing wastewater service to new development when to do so is prohibited by the CDP. However, the ten recent aforementioned appeals where this is and was an issue makes it clear that there is a pattern of disregard as pertains to the requirements of CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069. Moreover, the County was previously informed of these issues in a letter to Mark Hutchinson dated August 3, 2017 (enclosed). Thus, it appears that the County's disregard of permit requirements is "knowing and intentional." Therefore, going forward, we will have to consider County intent to serve in such cases, including approval of CDPs for projects that require such wastewater service from the County, to be knowing and intentional violations of the CDP, to which the Coastal Act's enforcement provisions could be applied. If there are any questions of CDP interpretation in that regard, the County is advised to discuss such issues with our staff well before taking action that would provide such wastewater services.

In conclusion, it is clear to us that the constraints to development in Los Osos require an honest assessment of the ways in which such development can and cannot be sustainably accommodated in terms of water supply, wastewater service, and ESHA.

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<sup>5</sup> And, where the evidence provided demonstrates that the development will not lead to new water use on a site, pre- and post-monitoring reports for water use on the site should also be considered as a condition of approval, and if the development results in an increase in water use on-site, mitigation measures to bring water use on the site to the pre-development level should also be implemented.

## **New development in Los Osos**

This is not a new conclusion, and simply continues to reflect the Commission's 2010 action in approving the County's wastewater treatment plant and system, and the terms and conditions pertaining thereto. These issues demand a planning solution that can provide clear LCP direction to all parties moving forward, and we recommend that the County allow that LCP process to be brought to conclusion and completion through the proposed Los Osos Community Plan. When, instead, the County accepts CDP applications and approves them under the current set of circumstances as described above, it simply leads to appeals of such actions to the Commission, each of which takes scarce staff resources away from moving that planning decision forward to fruition. We respectfully request that the County discontinue this practice, including so that we can collectively focus our limited time and resources on the LCP planning task at hand.

Thank you for your attention to these matters, and your requested assistance. I hope that you will share our view that it is simply not good public policy or good planning for there to be any more appeals of County CDP approvals for such development in Los Osos. We strongly believe that our mutual goals associated with adherence to the LCP and the coastal resource protections it requires are better served by recognizing and squarely addressing the issues described through the LCP, as opposed a continuing series of CDP approvals and appeals. I welcome a discussion on these issues when it is convenient for you.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Dan Carl, Director  
Central Coast District  
California Coastal Commission

Enclosure: August 3, 2017 Letter to Mark Hutchinson

cc: Bruce Gibson, San Luis Obispo County Second District Supervisor  
John Diodati, San Luis Obispo County Public Works Director  
Stephen P. Henry, USFWS  
Ron Munds, Los Osos Community Services District  
Mark Zimmer, Golden State Water Company  
Charlie Cote, S&T Mutual Water Company

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT  
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*\*Corrected Version\**  
*April 22, 2022*

**April 19, 2022**

Trevor Keith, Director  
San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building  
976 Osos Street, Room 200  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

**Subject: New Development in Los Osos**

Dear Mr. Keith:

The purpose of this letter is to highlight issues of mutual concern as they relate to proposed development in the community of Los Osos. As the County is well aware, including from the County's designation of an LCP Resource Management System Alert Level III for water supply (i.e., where demand exceeds existing supply, and still does) and from the 2015 designation by the California Department of Water Resources of the Los Osos Valley Groundwater Basin as a high priority basin due to its "condition of critical overdraft", there is insufficient water supply to serve even existing development in Los Osos without coastal resource harm (including where an over-drafted groundwater basin can adversely impact sensitive natural resources such as wetlands and marshes, coastal streams and adjacent riparian areas, and marine habitats, as well as adversely impact coastal priority uses such as agriculture and lower-cost visitor-serving development), let alone adding to it new water using development. In addition, much of Los Osos is considered environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) by the LCP within which most development, including residential development, is prohibited. This alone trips up most all residential development in Los Osos at varying levels. And finally, the County's wastewater treatment plant is prohibited from providing wastewater service to anything but existing development (and not to new development on existing lots)<sup>1</sup> unless and until the Estero Area Plan is amended to "identify appropriate and sustainable buildout limits, and any appropriate mechanisms to stay within such limits, based on conclusive evidence indicating that adequate water is available to support development of such properties without adverse impacts to ground and surface waters, including wetlands and all related habitats" as required by the Commission in Special

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<sup>1</sup> As we have previously noted, the County is prohibited by CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 from providing wastewater services to new development on vacant lots, and that prohibition extends to intensifications of use. Specifically, the Commission has found that the CDP's prohibition on new wastewater service does not only apply to new development on completely vacant parcels, but also to projects that include significant intensifications of use and significant expansions on already-developed properties. The Commission has verified this understanding in multiple Los Osos appeal cases (see adopted findings for A-3-SLO-19-0180 (Shear Development LLC SFDs), A-3-SLO-21-0005 (Kimbell Second Unit), A-3-SLO-21-0004 (Wise Second Unit), A-3-SLO-21-0007 (Bodine Second Unit), and A-3-SLO-21-0008 (Robertson Second Unit). In short, the County is prohibited by the CDP from providing wastewater services to such development, including intensifications of use, and if the County were to provide such services, the County would be in violation of that CDP and subject to potential Commission enforcement action.



## **New development in Los Osos**

Condition 6 of CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069. We are currently reviewing the Los Osos Community Plan that the County has submitted for this purpose and hope to bring that to hearing and Commission action by this summer. In the meantime, and with the goal of avoiding any additional appeals of County CDP actions in Los Osos and ultimately better protecting the Los Osos Groundwater Basin and related resources, we have the following observations and suggestions for the County.

First, please do not accept any CDP applications for filing that cannot demonstrate that they have legal access to both a sustainable water source and wastewater treatment services. To be clear, such applications should not be accepted for review unless and until such water and wastewater is available for use, as availability of these public services reflects a fundamental prerequisite for considering proposed development and must be considered at the filing stage. On this point, we do not believe that a will serve from a local water purveyor satisfies LCP and CDP requirements, including as the LCP finding that is required on this point is not for water purveyors to make, rather it is the County's independent responsibility. To this point, recent Commission's adopted findings on this issue state:<sup>2</sup>

*The County, as the initial CDP decision-making body for CDP applications that include new water use in Cambria [same as Los Osos], needs to consider these perhaps inconvenient facts, and stop approving or even considering such projects unless and until measurable steps are taken that improve water supply issues in Cambria [same as Los Osos]. The County should not be even accepting applications for development in Cambria [same as Los Osos] that cannot show evidence of an adequate water supply. A will-serve letter does not provide such evidence, and the County under the LCP is required to make its own finding that an adequate water supply is available to serve a proposed development, and cannot abrogate that responsibility to the CCSD [or here in Los Osos to any of the water purveyors]. The County is giving applicants a sense of 'false hope' when it does, and is doing a disservice to these applicants and the broader community. It is also leading to a significant number of appeals to, and subsequent CDP denials by, the Commission, each of which require an expenditure of scarce public resources to process.*

Unless development can meet the water and wastewater tests above, please do not make any CDP decisions where water supply, wastewater access, and ESHA are issues unless and until the LCP's Estero Area Plan is updated (via the pending Los Osos Community Plan) and those changes are certified by the Coastal Commission. Importantly, those LCP changes are at their core required to provide direction on sustainable growth and buildout in Los Osos as it is affected by these constraints, and it is not appropriate to be making CDP decisions that aren't based in that sort of assessment. As is, Los Osos-area water purveyors are raising their own questions about the sustainability of the Los Osos Groundwater Basin to serve development, and sustainable buildout has not been determined and certified into the LCP, including as it relates to ESHA (and the USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan that is currently in draft

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<sup>2</sup> See adopted Commission findings at <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2022/3/F15b/F15b-3-2022-report.pdf>.

## **New development in Los Osos**

form and still under development). In fact, the Commission has repeatedly determined that LCP consistency cannot be found for any new water using development in Los Osos at the current time, irrespective of any will-serve letter, finding most recently that:<sup>3</sup>

*...the LCP includes a series of provisions which require adequate water and wastewater services for new development, yet the community still does not have an adequate water supply at this time, including as evidenced by the Los Osos Basin Plan 2020 report. Until and unless there is conclusive evidence that adequate water services exist, public services remain a constraint to new development in Los Osos under the LCP.*

On this point we would note that in the last few years there have been ten appeals to the Coastal Commission of County CDP approvals for new residential projects in Los Osos. Of those appeals, the Commission took jurisdiction over the CDP applications for five of them (and denied one such application thus far) and five others withdrew their CDP applications after appeal, all for issues having to do with the water supply, wastewater service, and ESHA issues described above. We do not believe it is good planning or good public policy for the County to continue to take in and process CDP applications for projects that lead to an increase in water use on a site, and/or that require County wastewater services that cannot be provided, especially when the outcome is appeal to the Commission. This is exactly the sort of 'false hope' that the Commission alludes to in its findings quoted above. We believe that some certainty on these issues will be coming when the Commission considers the County's proposed Los Osos Community Plan in the near term, and that it is appropriate to wait for that outcome.

In order to provide as much clarity as possible in the meantime, please note that we consider guesthouses, hotel/motel expansions, and large use/structural intensifications associated with existing development to constitute such "new water-using" development. Unless and until conclusive evidence is provided showing that these types of development do not lead to an increase in water use on a given site, we believe that the precautionary principle should be applied, and that CDP applications for such development should not be accepted (because they cannot demonstrate the availability of an adequate and sustainable water source). At the same time we believe that it is likely that small home additions and renovations are not likely to increase water use on a property. Toward this end, we would suggest that an important threshold concept to be applied to the latter such CDP applications is to require applicants to demonstrate, with actual evidence, that the development they propose will not lead to an increase in water use at the site in question.<sup>4</sup> Such an evaluation demands water-use data and

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<sup>3</sup> See recent adopted Commission findings for an appeal of a County CDP decision in Los Osos from November 17, 2021 at <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2021/11/W14a/w14a-11-2021-report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> To be clear, this is different than trying to demonstrate that one can 'back out' or 'offset' new water use through some sort of offsite mechanisms, and rather is focused on ensuring that the development in question, by itself, will not lead to the need for additional water use at a site.

## **New development in Los Osos**

evidence to support any conclusions drawn, and it will be important to collect such information before any applications are filed.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, in our view brand new water-using development (such as a new single-family dwelling or an ADU) cannot meet LCP water supply tests, and CDP applications for such development should not be accepted for processing nor approved. Similarly, CDP applications for development that increases water use on a site (including explicitly guesthouses, hotel/motel expansions, and large use/structural intensifications (at least until a body of evidence is provided to demonstrate that such development does not actually lead to additional water use on such sites)) should also not be accepted for processing nor approved for similar reasons. We would expect that any County approvals of CDPs for such development are likely to be appealed to the Commission, which would likely lead to the Commission taking CDP jurisdiction or denying such applications, based on past recent cases. And finally, any CDP applications for other development needs to clearly demonstrate that such development will not lead to increased water use on the site in the manner described above. In sum, our intent with these observations is not to suggest that no CDP applications for development in Los Osos be accepted; rather, with respect to water, and in the interim as more community-scale water supply improvements are pursued, we believe it is important that proposed new development (whether on vacant or developed lots) does not exacerbate water supply-related problems.

Further, and with all due respect, please be advised that the terms and conditions of Commission-issued CDPs are enforceable. The County needs to take its continuing obligations, commitments and requirements from CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 more seriously. The Commission has thus far exercised restraint as it has tried to work with the County as it relates to cases where the County has committed to providing wastewater service to new development when to do so is prohibited by the CDP. However, the ten recent aforementioned appeals where this is and was an issue makes it clear that there is a pattern of disregard as pertains to the requirements of CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069. Moreover, the County was previously informed of these issues in a letter to Mark Hutchinson dated August 3, 2017 (enclosed). Thus, it appears that the County's disregard of permit requirements is "knowing and intentional." Therefore, going forward, we will have to consider County intent to serve in such cases, including approval of CDPs for projects that require such wastewater service from the County, to be knowing and intentional violations of the CDP, to which the Coastal Act's enforcement provisions could be applied. If there are any questions of CDP interpretation in that regard, the County is advised to discuss such issues with our staff well before taking action that would provide such wastewater services.

In conclusion, it is clear to us that the constraints to development in Los Osos require an honest assessment of the ways in which such development can and cannot be sustainably accommodated in terms of water supply, wastewater service, and ESHA.

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<sup>5</sup> And, where the evidence provided demonstrates that the development will not lead to new water use on a site, pre- and post-monitoring reports for water use on the site should also be considered as a condition of approval, and if the development results in an increase in water use on-site, mitigation measures to bring water use on the site to the pre-development level should also be implemented.

## **New development in Los Osos**

This is not a new conclusion, and simply continues to reflect the Commission's 2010 action in approving the County's wastewater treatment plant and system, and the terms and conditions pertaining thereto. These issues demand a planning solution that can provide clear LCP direction to all parties moving forward, and we recommend that the County allow that LCP process to be brought to conclusion and completion through the proposed Los Osos Community Plan. When, instead, the County accepts CDP applications and approves them under the current set of circumstances as described above, it simply leads to appeals of such actions to the Commission, each of which takes scarce staff resources away from moving that planning decision forward to fruition. We respectfully request that the County discontinue this practice, including so that we can collectively focus our limited time and resources on the LCP planning task at hand.

Thank you for your attention to these matters, and your requested assistance. I hope that you will share our view that it is simply not good public policy or good planning for there to be any more appeals of County CDP approvals for such development in Los Osos. We strongly believe that our mutual goals associated with adherence to the LCP and the coastal resource protections it requires are better served by recognizing and squarely addressing the issues described through the LCP, as opposed a continuing series of CDP approvals and appeals. I welcome a discussion on these issues when it is convenient for you.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Dan Carl, Director  
Central Coast District  
California Coastal Commission

Enclosure: August 3, 2017 Letter to Mark Hutchinson

cc: Bruce Gibson, San Luis Obispo County Second District Supervisor  
John Diodati, San Luis Obispo County Public Works Director  
Stephen P. Henry, USFWS  
Ron Munds, Los Osos Community Services District  
Mark Zimmer, Golden State Water Company  
Charlie Cote, S&T Mutual Water Company

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT OFFICE  
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WWW.COASTAL.CA.GOV



August 3, 2017

Mark Hutchinson, Deputy Director  
San Luis Obispo County Department of Public Works  
County Government Center, Room 206  
San Luis Obispo, CA, 93408

**Subject: Your letter to Dan Carl (Central Coast District Director) dated July 25, 2017  
regarding potential amendments to CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 (Los Osos  
Wastewater Project)**

Dear Mr. Hutchinson:

We received the above-referenced letter from you on July 31, 2017 in which you indicate that the County Board of Supervisors authorized the landowner of a property at 2045 Pine Street in Los Osos (Rick Kirk) to apply to the Coastal Commission: to amend the County's coastal development permit (CDP) for the Los Osos Wastewater Project (CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069) to include the subject parcel (APN 074-052-033) in the Wastewater Service Area; and to clarify the applicability of CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 conditions to this and other undeveloped properties in the Los Osos area subject to the Estero Area Plan. The purpose of this letter is to respond to both of those issues, and to provide direction to the County on the nature of the requirements that continue to adhere by virtue of CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069.

As you know, CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 Special Condition 6 **prohibits** wastewater service to undeveloped properties unless and until the Estero Area Plan is updated to identify appropriate and sustainable buildout limits, and that update is certified as an LCP amendment by the Coastal Commission. The County has been working on the required update to the Los Osos component of the Estero Area Plan, including the complementary Habitat Conservation Plan, for many years, but that update remains incomplete at the County level, and thus it has never been submitted to the Coastal Commission. Importantly, the LCP growth and buildout standards applicable to Los Osos that were required by the Coastal Commission to be updated have not yet been updated. As a result, and as we have discussed with you and your staff and other County staff in other departments, per the CDP **undeveloped properties are not allowed wastewater service at this time.**

With respect to potential amendments to the CDP to potentially add properties to the wastewater service area, such as the aforementioned request related to the property at 2045 Pine Street, the intent of the CDP (including Special Condition 7 allowing for it to be amended under certain circumstances) is **not** to facilitate development of undeveloped properties in Los Osos absent the required LCP update. On the contrary, and as we discussed with you and your staff and other County staff at the time of the original CDP approval, as well as since then, the intent of the potential amendment provision of the CDP is to consider minor modifications that address potential anomalies associated with **already developed** properties. For example, the Coastal

Commission approved a service area adjustment through a CDP amendment in June 2016 to allow the Monarch Grove area to be added to the service area so as to better protect coastal resources by connecting that area to the wastewater plant instead of continuing use of their failing package plant. At the same time, it is clear under the CDP that undeveloped properties (including significant intensifications of use and expansions on developed properties (e.g., such as the proposed expansion of the Sea Pines Golf Resort and Morro Shores Mobile Home Park) cannot be allowed sewer service and/or be brought into the service area absent the required Estero Area Plan LCP update. The County acknowledged and agreed to be bound by these terms and conditions when it accepted the CDP to construct the Los Osos Wastewater system.

As a result, please understand that we cannot support allowing undeveloped properties, such as the property at 2045 Pine Street, to be added to the service area or to be allowed wastewater service unless and until the LCP's Estero Area Plan is updated as required by CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069. In addition, and as we have informed you and other County staff, including as recently as May 31, 2017 (i.e., in an email from Daniel Robinson in the Central Coast District Office to you and Kerry Brown of the County's Planning and Building Department) it would appear quite clear at this point that any application proposing to amend CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 to allow same **would be required to be rejected** by Coastal Commission staff because it would lessen and avoid the intended effect of the Commission's CDP approval (see California Code of Regulations Section 13166(a)). Again, the Commission required the County to update the Los Osos portion of the Estero Area Plan through an LCP amendment subject to certain criteria before any undeveloped properties in Los Osos can be served. Thus, unless and until the Estero Area Plan is updated as required, modifications to service area boundaries to include undeveloped properties and/or allow wastewater service to undeveloped properties are not allowed by CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069.<sup>1</sup>

**In short, the requirements of the CDP prohibit the extension of wastewater service to undeveloped properties, and to do so would be a knowing and intentional violation of the CDP.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In addition, questions have arisen recently about the potential to allow development on properties prior to the required Estero Area Plan update that have been awarded wastewater or water saving credits (otherwise known as 'Title 19 Retrofit Certificates') in the past. In terms of wastewater credits, the RWQCB has indicated that any credits available from past actions were intended for properties that were already eligible to connect to the sewer. For example, if someone has a property that is eligible to connect to the community sewer system and wanted to build prior to being hooked up to the sewer, then they could utilize a credit to install a temporary septic system. However, as detailed above, only already-developed properties are eligible for sewer connection at this time, and thus they would not need a temporary septic credit. In terms of the retrofit certificates, these certificates alone do not somehow entitle development at this time. Although these water conservation certificates were previously issued to properties in the septic prohibition zone, the certificate does not somehow guarantee the right to develop parcels upon completion of the sewer. As described above, the key threshold before wastewater service can be provided to any undeveloped property is certification of the Los Osos portion of the Estero Area Plan by the Coastal Commission.

<sup>2</sup> We note that the County correctly denied a CDP for development of the proposed *Novy* residence on Pasadena Drive on these grounds in September 2016. We further note that on August 4, 2017 the County Planning

We understand that certain members of the community are interested in developing their properties now that the wastewater treatment plant is up and running, and we can appreciate their desire to do so, including after the significant efforts by many to bring the wastewater treatment plant and system in Los Osos online. At the same time, however, the County is obligated to finalize the update to the Los Osos portion of the Estero Area Plan through an LCP amendment before that occurs, and that requirement has been in existence for over a decade, dating back to a similar requirement associated with the since abandoned wastewater treatment plant CDP approved by the Coastal Commission in 2004, and also because the County required the same as part of its approval of the wastewater treatment plant in late 2009 (i.e., County Condition 92, which was part of the County's proposed project before the Commission when the Commission approved CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 in 2010). We would strongly suggest that the County put its efforts towards completing the required LCP planning instead of pursuing any measures designed to avoid its CDP obligations.

Finally, despite the Board authorizing a private citizen to apply to amend the County's CDP, we note that it is the County that is the Permittee of the subject CDP, and it is the County that would have to be the Applicant for any amendment to it. The County could apply on an individual's or group's behalf, as was done for the Monarch Grove CDP amendment request described above, but the County would have to be the entity to request the amendment. We would not be able to accept an amendment application by a private individual or group.

In closing, we again note that the Coastal Commission's CDP requirements that prohibit wastewater service to undeveloped properties in Los Osos are unambiguous, and we strongly suggest that the County recognize that requirement in all County actions (including in accepting any CDP applications, and in any County CDP actions).

We continue to be available to assist County staff as it attempts to complete the required LCP update, and we strongly recommend that the County concentrate its resources on those efforts. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please contact me or Daniel Robinson of my staff at (831) 427-4863.

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Commission will hear a CDP application to develop another undeveloped property in Los Osos (i.e., the proposed *Watterworth* residence on Mitchell Drive), and the Planning Commission should deny this project for the very same reason. Again, approval of development that uses wastewater services on undeveloped properties would be a violation of the County's CDP, and would be subject to enforcement proceedings.

Mark Hutchinson  
CDP A-3-SLO-09-055/069 Requirements  
August 3, 2017  
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DAN CARL", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Carl  
District Director  
Central Coast District Office  
California Coastal Commission

cc: (via email)  
Supervisor Bruce Gibson  
Supervisor John Peschong  
Supervisor Adam Hill  
Supervisor Lynn Compton  
Supervisor Debbie Arnold  
Planning Commissioner Michael Multari  
Planning Commissioner Julie Hawkins  
Planning Commissioner Jim Harrison  
Planning Commissioner Don Campbell  
Marvin Rose, County Department of Planning and Building Interim Director  
Wade Horton, County Public Works Department Director  
Jeff Edwards (Representative for Rick Kirk)