

Cal Coast News

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Warding off water wars

September 7, 2011



EDITOR'S NOTE: See Adjudication in Action and a groundwater supply and demand chart at the bottom of this story.

By LISA RIZZO

People in northern San Luis Obispo County are running out of water—some faster than others. And, unless a community effort to stabilize the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin is successful, it could mean letting a judge decide who has a right to the water inside and how much.

Senior Planner with the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building James Caruso says the health of the basin, which lies beneath 790 square miles of land from Santa Margarita to just north of the Monterey County line, is in jeopardy.

“The situation is critical,” Caruso says.

The Paso Robles Groundwater Basin is the primary water supply for northern San Luis Obispo County, providing water for 29 percent of the county’s population and an estimated 40 percent of its agriculture, according to the county’s most recent management plan.

For thousands of people, including many in rural Paso Robles, Templeton, Creston, Shandon, and Garden Farms to San Miguel, it is the only source of residential water. It's a supply that is rapidly declining, hydrogeologists from Todd Engineers and Furgo West report.

The county says "pumping of groundwater from the basin has reached or is quickly approaching the basin's perennial yield" of 97,700 acre-feet of water for 2011, the maximum amount deemed safe to withdraw before groundwater levels drop further.

Water consumption beyond the safe yield also means overdraft conditions, a point where the basin is no-longer sustainable, or able to naturally replenish itself. Essentially the clock is ticking.

A community volunteer effort, led by San Luis Obispo County and the City of Paso Robles, is underway to resolve the groundwater crisis.

Chairman of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Steering Committee Larry Werner says many stakeholders are left with no choice but to put their issues aside and help develop an implementable plan to successfully resolve the chronic basin conditions or face war in court.

"We have a problem here, but we can solve it because we have the force to do it," he says.

Digging deep

More than 8,000 private and commercial wells now tap into the basin, according to the County Public Health Department, Division of Environmental Health. Growth within the last decade, particularly the wine boom, has caused groundwater levels in those wells to drop from 10 feet to more than 70 feet depending on the location, according to county charts and planners.

One homeowner, Sue Luft, has been monitoring her well's water level since it was drilled in the El Pomar area east of Templeton in 1998. Luft says she has seen the water level drop by 87 feet in just 13 years.

"Pumping is greater than the basin can handle," she said.

A major community effort to stabilize the basin must be made, Luft said. Or else, "It will make our property worthless."

Dozens of rural landowners each year are forced to drill new wells due to dropping water levels, setting them back at a minimum \$20,000 expense per well and as much as \$200,000 for an agricultural well, according to local drilling companies.

While the new wells revived some residents' water sources it also led them to foreclosure.

Miller Drilling Company Manager Kurt Bollinger in Templeton said several of the properties near Highway 46 and Jardine Road in Paso Robles that the company re-drilled wells for in recent years are now bank-owned. The expense of digging for more water helped put the homeowners upside down on their mortgages, Bollinger said.

The worst may be yet to come for many landowners. Any water well more than 20 to 30 years old will likely need to be re-drilled, said managers from Cal West Rain and Miller Drilling Company.

The current groundwater levels have doubled the depth needed to drill for new wells in the North County. A minimum 700-foot-well is required now, far surpassing the old 300-foot standard, they say.

In addition, the City of Paso Robles has regularly faced seasonal water supply problems when existing wells do not adequately meet peak water demands, so it has been forced to find supplemental water supply sources to service its residential and commercial water users.

Overdraft: To be or not to be

Response to inquires into whether the basin is already in overdraft varies depending on who is asked.

The basin goes into overdraft this year, according to "Scenario 1" in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study (RCS), identified by Caruso as the "most likely" situation.

Some critics, mostly from the wine industry, dispute the results because of numerous variables, estimations and gaps in available data.

The county has not declared overdraft, despite the four-year study which overall found the situation is dangerously close.

But last fall, the Board of Supervisors approved the RCS, its findings and recommendations, and established the highest measure of severity, a Level III under the county resource management system.

Then in February, the supervisors confirmed that the groundwater levels are dropping throughout the basin and that pumping has reached or is quickly approaching its "perennial yield." They did not say the basin was in overdraft.

The basin, however, could be in overdraft long before the government makes the declaration. That's because to county attorneys and management, overdraft is a "naughty

word”—one that they cannot currently use because it would declare a start to a legal war, known as adjudication.

The county is leery because history has shown adjudication is a process that takes water decisions out of the hands of the users and in the hands of the court.

When a groundwater basin is in overdraft, water users can file legal action asking the judicial system to establish groundwater rights. If a lawsuit is brought on to adjudicate the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, the court would determine which well owners could extract water and how much.

Two San Luis Obispo County groundwater basins are already in adjudication: the Los Osos Groundwater Basin and the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin.

After 12 years, the Santa Maria adjudication is still tied up in appeals, has exceeded \$11 million in total costs, and has yet to be completed.

County planner Caruso says he believes overdraft and adjudication for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin are not a matter of if, but when.

Keeping “peace”

There is essentially a treaty currently in place to prevent this costly legal war over water from starting, yet. It is called the Paso Robles Imperiled Overlying Rights Agreement (PRIOR).

Knowing the threat of adjudication loomed in the near future, municipal users and several major North County landowners entered into a 10-year agreement in August 2005.

The local government promised not to declare overdraft if the landowners agreed not to file legal action to establish a priority of their groundwater rights over the municipal users, according to the PRIOR legal contract. In exchange, the landowners agreed to cooperate with any groundwater management plan and encourage other water well owners to do so.

The PRIOR contract expires in less than three years on Jan. 1, 2014, unless it is renewed. The county says it does not plan to declare overdraft in the meantime, even if the basin is in-fact in overdraft. Caruso says it would be an end to voluntary cooperation and a start to litigation.

In the fall of last year, some county employees say they mistakenly “slipped” and used the word overdraft to describe the basin’s status in staff reports. Local media printed it, upsetting many water users and municipal suppliers and fueling further controversy.

Now public officials are more careful to avoid the word, on the record, and the stakeholders are working to build cooperation rather than controversy.

Uncertain future

County planners are working to help people understand the severity of the water crisis but their power to fix the problem is limited, they say.

The cities and county cannot legally restrict how much water a landowner pumps because it is a California constitutional property right, despite some residents who beg the county to control consumption from the majority (67 percent) consumer of the groundwater, farmers and grape growers.

In addition, there is no legal ability to stop more vineyards from being planted because of limitations in the permitting process and the fact that it would conflict with the county general plan.

Grape growers argue that they have proven to be efficient users of water, showing successful conservation efforts and many cases of sustainable farming over the last several years. But growth continues.

The City of Paso Robles, which in 2010 needed 6,326 acre-feet of water, 2,338 from the basin and 3,988 from the Salinas River, has contracted to import 4,000 acre-feet per year of Lake Nacimiento water, according to a city plan.

Once a treatment plant to process the lake water is constructed, anticipated to begin in 2015, the city projects the new water source will relieve part of the burden on the basin until demand increases.

Paso Robles plans to acquire an additional 1,400 acre-feet per year of Nacimiento water beginning in 2020, according to the Paso Robles 2010 Urban Water Management Plan.

While the city says Nacimiento water can never be a primary source rather supplemental because it is not a guaranteed supply and relies on uncertain factors, critics in the agricultural industry say they want the city to consider buying more of the 6,000 acre-feet of lake water still up for grabs and use basin water as little as possible. Many city residents oppose that plan, arguing they should not be burdened with higher water costs to support the wine industry's water demand.

Water conservation programs have been expanded, including the formation of a steering committee—a volunteer group of stakeholders to help the development and community implementation of a management plan intended to stabilize the basin.

In August, the Paso Robles City Council delayed adoption of the new Groundwater Basin Management Plan partly due to controversy over one of the plan's priorities to monitor groundwater levels through private wells—resistance stemming from grape growers who do not want their water consumption to become public record, the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance says.

Through community outreach, government officials have been stressing the need to monitor water levels to fill gaps in their data and measure any success of basin stabilization efforts. About 175 wells are in the network and adding just 20 in strategic locations would increase the value of the information, the county said at a recent steering committee meeting. They promise confidentiality, stressing private well data would only be used for government studies and reports.

Some stakeholders are optimistic that if they achieve widespread cooperation the community can resolve the water crisis by avoiding adjudication and stabilizing the basin. But some, like Management Plan Steering Committee member Steve Sinton, say the county needs to focus more on solutions rather than monitoring the problem, water levels.

“Think of it as if we are on a ship that is sinking. Getting information on how fast we are sinking is not going to stop us from sinking,” Sinton said at the Aug. 25 steering committee meeting.

What the stakeholders can all agree on is the goal—solving the problem, committee chairman Werner says.

And while the future is unknown, one thing is for certain, Caruso says.

“Solutions to this problem will take collaboration and cooperation from all parties. Anything short of that—we will not see success.”

Adjudication in action

If the effort to stabilize the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin fails and San Luis Obispo County declares the water supply in overdraft, a lawsuit over water rights would likely follow and lead to adjudication.

Adjudication is a process in which a court determines the groundwater rights of all overlayers, property owners above the groundwater basin. A judge would rule who the extractors are and how much water they can pump.

There are 22 adjudicated groundwater basins in California; 21 were undertaken in State Superior Court and one in federal court, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

The most recent case comes from San Luis Obispo County, the adjudication of the Santa Maria Valley Basin which spans from Pismo Beach south to Orcutt, and into the valley.

The case has been ongoing for 12 years and has exceeded \$11 million in total expenses, according to the County of San Luis Obispo.

South County resident knew they had a water crisis on their hands when wells began to fail, pumps burnt out, and people ran out of water.

Overdraft could not be proven with certainty but the court recognized an even greater threat—pumping depressions that could pull in sea water and jeopardize the water supply.

The Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District brought on a lawsuit against the City of Santa Maria and a slew of other defendants to assert its water right over the others.

A Santa Clara County Judge issued a ruling on the case in 2005 based on an agreement between most of the stakeholders.

One defendant with water rights at stake is the Nipomo Community Services District. District director Mike Winn says adjudication has cost South County residents time and money.

“When you get sued, generally you need to countersue,” Winn said. “There are hundreds of litigants now.”

More than \$3 million in adjudication expenses is being passed on to the Nipomo Community and the fight is not over, Winn said. Some farmers, unhappy with the ruling, are appealing the judgment.

Part of the solution to their groundwater crisis is to bring in additional sources of water to compensate for empty depressions in the ground which hydro-geologists expect to cause even bigger problems within the next 10-15 years.

Winn says the new water is essential for the South County because sea water has already “poisoned a number of wells.”

“When you are docking a boat you don’t wait until you get to the dock to turn off the engine,” Winn said. “The supplemental water project is a desire to get ahead of the curve.”

Some people are still not wanting to cooperate, despite the court ruling. Winn says some of them are apathetic, being that they are of retirement age, so they don’t expect the crisis to climax in their lifetime.

“We have serious water problems on the Mesa but people are going around saying there is not, so they don’t have to pay for anything,” he said.

“The problem is very very real.”

Groundwater supply and demand

The annual supply of water available in the Paso Robles Groundwater basin is 97,700 acre-feet (AFY), also referred to as the “perennial yield,” according to the Furgo 2002 and 2005 technical studies.

The Resource Capacity Study includes estimations of water demand in acre feet for several years:

[Chart courtesy of San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department]

Groundwater User	1997	2000	2006	2009
Net Agriculture	49,683	56,551	58,680	63,077
Urban	13,513	14,629	15,665	16,382
Rural	9,400	9,993	10,891	11,817
Small Community	—	—	594	—
Small Commercial	1,465	1,465	2,323	2631
Total AFY	74,061	82,638	88,153	93,907

59 Comments

1. *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 4:59 pm](#)

QuOTING THE ARTICLE:

"...Knowing the threat of adjudication loomed in the near future, municipal users and several major North County landowners entered into a 10-year agreement in August 2005....The local government promised not to declare overdraft if the landowners agreed not to file legal action to establish a priority of their groundwater rights over the municipal users, according to the PRIOR legal contract. In exchange, the landowners agreed to cooperate with any groundwater management plan and encourage other water well owners to do so.....In the fall of last year, some county employees say they mistakenly "slipped" and used the word overdraft to describe the basin's status in staff reports. Local media printed it, upsetting many water users and municipal suppliers and fueling further controversy...."

The need for individuals to join together in preparation for the inevitable future legal battle is critical in light of a new law awaiting the governor's signature. SB 263, awaiting the governor's signature, usurps the privacy rights of the individual well owner. Basically, the new bill forces individual well owners to make public information about their wells that was previously private.

In dividing up water rights, the State, County and large commercial interests (i.e., vineyard owners/winemakers and developers) have the resources to overwhelm the unorganized private individual property owners. I think SB 263 is a vision of what is to come, as individual water rights are slowly chipped away.

Here's a summary I put together about the bill.

SB 263

Passed by the Senate: 9/9/2011

Enrolled: 9/13/2011

Sent to the Governor for signature: 9/16/2011

Prior to the Governor's signature of SB 263 into law, the law requires any person who digs, bores, or drills a water well or other well related to withdrawing groundwater for use, or abandons or destroys a well, or does certain modifications on a well, to file a report (a "well-completion report") with the California Department of Water Resources. This information, except in very special circumstances, is—by law—not made public.

Since the water rights usually go along with the property rights, a demand for private well information was often considered to be a demand for private

information on the property upon which the well was located (often the owner's home). This is viewed by some as an invasion of an individual's rights to privacy.

Often these well owners are farmers. Farmers are viewed by many Americans to be American icons. When a well owner is an American icon, many people will see a breach of well owner's rights as being akin to a breach of America's rights.

Anything that has to do with water in California is a big deal. Water rights associated with land can greatly change the worth of the land. Huge legal fights have been over the rights to water. An owner's property and water rights are sacred, and for some owners their personal identity and worth (and the identity and worth of their forefathers who owned the land and water rights) are closely entwined with their land and water rights.

SB 263 requires the DWR to make these well-completion reports available (with certain restrictions) to a wide array of governmental, educational, and professional agencies and individuals. These include governmental agencies for studies, college-level or higher academics for research, geologists, geophysicists, hydrologists, civil engineers, licensed well contractors or any person who obtain written authorization from the well owner.

With uploading of information to the internet done so frequently, it is reasonable to expect that these records will become available to the public at large.

SB 263 is a paradigm-shifter. It is the complete reality-change of a well-owner's rights to privacy regarding well records. What was a right becomes a law. What was an individual's private information becomes public information.

Currently SB 263 only applies to the form the owner is required to file with the DWR when a well is dug, bored, etc. (as noted above).

However, SB 263 does something no other legislation has done before: it breaches the right to privacy of the what the owner of a well (and usually the property where the well is located) does with his/her property (including water rights).

This information, combined with information from other well owners, and information in general about the region being studied, can provide a wealth of information.

According to the Groundwater Resources Association, "Well completion reports contain critical information for groundwater managers, consulting hydrologists, academics, and others interested in and conducting studies on the geologic, hydrologic, and water quality characteristics of groundwater basins, earthquake risk assessments, and other geologic hazards. Unfortunately, those who would benefit from and need this information for these

critical studies cannot currently have access to it.

“Well completion reports can also be used to construct detailed underground aquifer maps. These maps along with hydrogeological data are critical to developing and implementing groundwater management plans. For example, such data can be used to determine possible locations for efficient and effective groundwater banking, identify key recharge areas, and to better protect and improve groundwater quality.”

In the past, well owners would often agree to share their well information.

Example: When the Santa Maria-Nipomo Mesa-Five Cities water basin lawsuit was in progress, before much could be done, the Court needed to know what was occurring, hydrologically, with the water basin under litigation. Many of the private well owners agreed to provide their records to the engineering companies contracted to do research and prepare the reports for the Court and the litigants.

So, I'm not saying that it's a bad thing for this information to be shared. What I'm saying is what used to be a **privacy right for the individual land/well owner** who could, if they wished, share this important information with others, now is something the **individual land/well owner is required by law to provide and can be forced** to allow the DWR to release the information as the DWR sees fit, and according to some very wide definitions of who can have it.

Like or Dislike:  2  2

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- o *Josixpack* says:

[09/24/2011 at 7:12 am](#)

“Some critics, mostly from the wine industry, dispute the results because of numerous variables, estimations and gaps in available data.”

GAPS in information is the problem. There IS NO accurate baseline water use data for the area because the well drillers/private land/vineyard owners often do not allow access or objective monitoring of their actual water use. THEY provide the numbers for the hydrologists thereby creating the water usage estimates they want to reveal. There are large commercial scale wells, municipal size pumps and piping systems using /storing vast amounts of water in resevoirs and operating without ANY over sight and completely un monitored, even when they are taking HUGE amounts of creek underflow and depleting entire watarsheds/ streamflows during low rainfall years.

Then....as Mary said, They claim rights for such Control of what actually

does not belong to them:

There MUST be some system of oversight before it is too late.. Water =money and if you let large scale commercial farmers (developers) control/regulate/report their own data-its like asking Wall Street to audit and regulate the big banks. How many large scale developments on agricultural lands began with a vineyard? That's the way to chip away and convert the zoning /building allowances piece by piece and to adjudicate the water.

“In dividing up water rights, the State, County and large commercial interests (i.e., vineyard owners/winemakers and developers) have the resources to overwhelm the unorganized private individual property owners. I think SB 263 is a vision of what is to come, as individual water rights are slowly chipped away.”

Like or Dislike:  1  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *MaryMalone* says:

[09/26/2011 at 3:04 pm](#)

See my posts from 9/22/2011.


IMO, “gaps” secondary to private well owners not being willing to give up their rights to privacy over their property and its use is not an issue.

If you look at the studies done for the Nipomo Mesa, clearly there are consistently higher and lower water levels across the Mesa.

Since the problem of a severe level of water resource shortage on a macro level (i.e., across the Nipomo Mesa), the available well data is sufficient for a “macro” assessment of the level of severity.

The real problem, IMO, is the fact that, on the one hand, the State mandates:

1. Water conservation accountability, with the ability to receive grant and loan funds if water conservation of a certain level is not achieved.
2. Building of high-density residential housing for all counties, even if they are already at a high level of water resource shortage.

Like or Dislike:   1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *oto* says:

[10/07/2011 at 8:23 pm](#)

Jazuz H. Christi! You have hit the nail on the head. This is THE most important issue for residents of San Luis Obispo—and the nation, for that matter—to consider. Each one of us needs to understand the arguments on both sides, in coming to a decision about what to do with our water. We need water to drink, water to grow food, water for energy, water for transportation, water for livestock, water for the health of the planet, water for our very survival. How do we allocate it?

Fortunately, we do not have to re-invent the wheel. We can look to other communities to see how they allocate their water. We can look to pre-existing contracts to see how allocations are worded. We can use the advice of experts in the field. One thing we don't need is obstruction to access those public documents and information. We need to fire any lawyer that obstructs that access because when they fail to provide the information they have a duty to give us, they do not act in our best interests.

We need an honest answer from our government employees when we ask them, "What is the status of my town's water? Where does our water come from? What is the source of that water? How much water is there? How much water is being used, and by whom? How much water will our town need in the future, for each type of use?"

When I attempted to get that information from Oceano's local board, I was threatened with a lawsuit for asking for public records. I was threatened by the town's general manager Thomas Geaslen, with arrest.

I was threatened with arrest by Sheriff's Southstation commander Kenneth M. Conway, who told me that if I asked a question at one of the Halcyon Advisory Committee meetings that he "would report me to the FBI as a terrorist." This threat was uttered in the presence of newspaper reporters, at that public meeting.

I was ordered out of the district office by sheriff's deputy Scott Odom for asking Geaslen why he was charging me two and half times the cost of copies, then refusing to provide the board resolution which might ratify his retaliatory and unauthorized increase in the cost.

I refused to leave, since this was my First Amendment right to know the government's business, which they had the gall to ignore.

Odom kept asking Geaslen to make a "citizen's arrest," so he could throw me in jail.

Geaslen, who was Supervisor Paul Teixeira's campaign manager after Geaslen's house was foreclosed, decided not to do this. I sensed that he didn't want reporters snooping into his former business dealings as a self-professed "loan arranger."

After that, when I attempted to ask Oceano's water maintenance staff whether they keep records on the dates they actually read the water meters, the district's employee Steve Langsdorf threatened "to beat my ass." This threat was both heard and witnessed by my neighbors. But it was Langsdorf, seeking to cover his ass, who called the sheriffs.

The neighbor stepped out on his porch when he heard Langsdorf's co-worker deny he heard what was said. "Well, I heard you." said my neighbor to Langsdorf, as he came out from shade of his doorway, where he had witnessed everything.

I thank him for having the courage to take a stand against dishonest employees like Langsdorf, who should not be working for Oceano. There are so many other people out there, who are more capable, who are willing to do an honest day's work. Why settle for less?

Instead, Thurmond suggested that the best way to keep me from accessing public documents concerning Oceano's water and sewer problems, would be to ask the Court for a restraining order. She lost. But I have been afraid to go into the office to ask for information or conduct my research into old board agendas and documents not on the net.

The last time I went in, I was refused a receipt for my water payment by Carol Ann Pardo, the board secretary. I always ask for receipts and this was an attempt to provoke an argument. She refused to acknowledge the cash payment with her initials and a date stamp showing that the payment was for the water bill, and not something else. She was trying to start a fight as a way to deny access to the districts public facilities and records.

Then, Geaslen came out and interrupted my question to Celia Ruiz, the person who inputs the residents' bimonthly water usage details into the computer after these are given to her by Dan Silveira. This is an ongoing problem. Why?

The board's new hire –(the one who has the most to learn since he never set foot in the OCSD prior to his appointment, and who is not a resident of Oceano)–has succeeded in poisoning any kind of working relationship with the women who run the office, Carol Ann Pardo and Celia Z. Ruiz.

In fact, Geaslen has usurped their job duties using his “supervisory” authority over them: he has instructed all his employees not to answer any questions if I should come in to do business with the District. He has singled me out, and my attempt to do research or get receipts for cash payments, is particularly bothersome to him. He is afraid of my ability to learn. Rather than do his own research, he would rather interfere with mine.

There is plenty of information for both of us to learn, when it comes to Oceano's water and sewer funding. The big question for me is, where are the original contracts, invoices, project completion records, and billing and time cards? The last time I was threatened with arrest for asking, Carol Ann Pardo had just boxed them up, called “Steve” to ask if he wanted these records before she “threw them away,” and I asked her to make a list of the titles of the documents she was “getting rid of.”

Pardo refused to do this. When Geaslen came, she claimed I was “causing problems” by asking for these. Geaslen threatened to call the sheriffs. I saved him the trouble and brought one into the office for him.

This was during the grand jury's investigation of the South County Sewer District and OCSD's “record-keeping” practices. The deputy had barely stepped out of the substation to speak with me when he was immediately called back to the Substation by Kenneth Conway– but not before he had followed me back to the OCSD office to view the three large boxes of documents Pardo had been planning to “throw out.”

When the deputy heard the grand jury was investigating both Wallace and Oceano's sewer district, he stated to Geaslen, “Don't remove those boxes from the office.” And he returned to the station.

Niether those documents nor my written public records requests have been answered, and my requests to view those public records was refused. I have not seen those records since, and they have been expressly denied by both Geaslen and Thurmond.

It is time for change in Oceano. And change is coming regardless of the machinations of a few bad employees.

With classic hubris, Geaslen has directed Pardo and Ruiz to let him know when I pay my water bill to the OCSD, or attempt to do research, or ask any routine question, in order to force me into personal contact with him.

Geaslen stated that “their job duties had changed.” I asked him to provide a written description of their job duties so I could know what to expect of them when attempting to conduct routine business at the OCSD. Geaslen refused to inform me as to what their jobs were, and he refused to provide written descriptions of their job duties.

So, I have no way of knowing what they can do for me, or who to ask. There is no way to avoid Gealen, who is 100 per cent the initiating party in all my conversations with him.

There is simply no way to avoid the sexual harassment, and hostile work environment created by him, and manipulated with backing from Lucey, Angelo and the “old guard,” from the days when the Davises ran the water district and controlled the finances of the CSD.

Pardo and Ruiz, who view public access to district records as a threat to their job longevity, view this as welcome strategy. With no one in the office doing research in the public record, there are less witnesses to them closing the office before business hours end, as they did when Montemurro was there.

There are no witnesses to their taking long lunches, without reflecting that time off on their time cards, as Pardo has done.

There is no questioning of Pardo’s or Ruiz’s obstruction to access public records when I ask for them, or of Pardo’s using her work hours to babysit the son of Los Osos resident “Ed” while Ed visits with staff in their offices. (Everyone in Oceano who knows Ed refers to him as “The Guy Who Wants to Shut Down Oceano Airport and Build Housing On It...”)

If the sheriffs haven’t manipulated the video recordings in their surveillance equipment which covers the entrances to the OCSD, their comings and goings should be date and time stamped, should anyone question the truth of my statements.
(Then again, we know what the sheriff’s reputation is for altering audiovisual recordings in the past. Let’s hope there is change for the better with our new elected sheriff.)

I view this as sexual harassment because it appears that Geaslen is offended by a female’s quest for information about the town.

These are true statements, and there must be other Oceano residents who had the experience of trying to do business at the CSD only to find the door locked and the office closed during normal business hours.

I am not only a ratepayer, but will be running for the Oceano's Board of Directors in the next election, during which Oceano voters will be asked whether or not they want to sell off the town's water. We must learn about our water rights, and defeat anyone who attempts to obstruct access that most vital public information, as both Lucy, Angelo, and Geaslen are trying to do, so as to manipulate the public's water rights to benefit a few, without any public scrutiny at all.

Geaslen was placed in his position with a purpose to deny access to public OCSD documents. He has perfected a hostile working environment for me in preparing myself to be a candidate for the OCSD board. His misogyny has much to do with his appointment to his job as general manager.

And inevitably the other women working beneath him will come to recognize his manipulation as defacatory to their individual advancement. I have stated as much to him, after he lost his lawsuit to restrain me from using the public facilities of the district for a public purpose.

However, the district board, and the sheriff's department have not only refused to intercede in cases of sexual harassment/hostile work environment violations of the Penal Code, but they have purposefully furthered that custom and policy.

Entire lawsuits have been published over years of county personnel decisions, and in county court documents to support my point of view. The tragedy is that so many of the county's local women buy into that mentality. Many are blind to the alternatives because they have never travelled, or lived in a multi-cultural environment.

What we need is a little "chispa."

In acting as Odom did by encouraging Gealen to intimidate and harass me as he did, Odom was derilict in his duties, demonstrating an inability to cope with women as heads of their own household, and as political candidates.

Conway's malicious threat to slander me to the FBI by making a false charge to them, as he did when he threatened to "report my questions to the Halcyon Advisory Committee" as "terrorism," was in fact an unlawful obstruction of the right of free speech, association and assembly.

Thus, Conroy was breaking the law while “acting under color of his authority”. In fact, what Conroy, Geaslen and Odom were doing was using their respective cloaks of authority to threaten me before the committee and Oceano’s community, in order to obstruct access to public information.

This was particularly apparent in light of the fact that one of the committee members received \$100,000.00 of public money from the OCSD to benefit her own private property.

What did Oceano get in return? Where is that accounting? How were the funds spent in a way which justified its expenditure? How did it benefit Oceano, or bring money back into the district?

It was when I attempted to access the old Board agendas and packets to answer that question that I was threatened with arrest by Odom, Conway and Gealen (Teixeira’s former campaign manager and husband of Teixeira’s current legislative analyst.)

I was not “disrupting a meeting,” I was asking for “a point of order,” to ask a question. So, from my perspective, it looks as if these employees are facilitating the cover up information, (or the complete lack of record-keeping,) which they do not want Oceano residents to know: where their water is going and where is the district’s money is going?

It is that simple. The next logical question to ask is this: what is Geaslen’s personal financial stake in all this, beyond merely seeing that his job gets done, and the public records kept in the normal course of the government’s business?

Or is it a case of simple misogyny, and fear of female intelligence and potential?

I have to think that was Geaslen’s motive when he promoted Davis’s water maintenance employee to “supervisor” after Silviera had Langsdorf vandalize my home by spray-painting my retaining wall with paint. Why? Because I complained that Silviera had refused to comply with the utilities’ underground service request to identify my utility lines when they asked him to—three times.

After Geaslen ignored these requests, I complained to our new sheriff’s administration. The sheriff’s advised Geaslen to have Langsdorf remove the paint. True to form, Langsdorf removed half of it.

Neighbors witnessed this, as well.

This begs the question, do you really want the County's employees to be deciding what to do with the water you are paying for, that is coming out of your tap?

Of course, every person who drinks water has the inalienable right to know what is happening to it, and who is controlling it. This is part of the constitutional right to the peace and quiet enjoyment of their own home, and to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." God forbid, someone with the mentality of Conway or Geaslen ever got control over such a vital and necessary natural resource.

Yet, public information about what Oceano is doing with its water rights, is expressly being denied to residents who live in Oceano for the sole purpose of keeping them in the dark about how to manage their own local water resources, and who Thurmond is negotiating with to sell off Oceano's water prior to Oceano's vote on the issue in the November, 2012 election.

If you don't know about your water and how it gets to your tap, and trust blindly that you can place that knowledge into the hands of a few bureaucrats, then you may wake up one morning and find gas coming out of your showerhead instead of water. You cannot choose your leaders without knowing what they know. An informed public makes the best decisions.

Thurmond was already involved in the Santa Maria groundwater litigation as an attorney for the County of San Luis Obispo before she was hired by Montemurro and former director Jim Hill. Therefore, she has a personal financial stake in siezing control of Oceano's water entitlement and decision-making power over the sale of water and giving that control to the County. She works for the County Counsel's subcontractor, the law firm of Hall & Heiatt.

She wants to give control over Oceano's allotment of water to the County's Dept. of Public Works. Why? Because this will personally keep money flowing to Hall & Heiatt and to her. What do you want to bet that Oceano's water will be sold to Nipomo so they can develop housing and oil on the mesa?

It will benefit individual developers and attorneys who have financial investments there and in Pismo Beach. It will benefit the private engineering firm of John Wallace. This is my prediction, but certainly not my wish. I want Oceano to reap the benefits of its water conservation efforts, to use its "excess water" to replenish its groundwater, and to benefit the town's residents. I would rather use the county's planning resources to develop granny units on existing properties to benefit

homeowners, using the county's own award-winning standard plans for these simple and safe structures.

Once people who live here can improve their homes and make themselves economically secure without being gullible enough to take out a ridiculously inflated bank loan in the middle of a depression, then we can worry about selling our beach front properties to large scale developers and individuals living in the top one percent of the income bracket.

But if the District is permitted to do business as it has done in the past, Oceano will lose the power to decide whether it wants to sell its "excess water" during periods of heavy rainfall, or to recharge its groundwater. The District will take away the power of Oceano residents to decide who it wants to sell its water to, or to negotiate for what it wants of equal value in return. This is why access to public records is so important. This is why, when you are denied access to know what your local government is doing, the red flag should go up.

That is why when asked who the OCSD was negotiating with over water rights, Thurmond shot back, "That's not for the public to know. If you want to know, read the lawsuit." This response which expressly violates public records law, sends the clear message that Thurmond views Oceano residents as "the opposing party."

In the ten months she has been billing OCSD for her services, she has never once given a public accounting of her involvement with parties connected to the Santa Maria groundwater litigation, like the Teixeira family. She has never publicly admitted her firm's ongoing financial involvement with the County Counsel's Office and the County of San Luis Obispo.

When Thurmond was asked point blank at an OCSD meeting which parties she was negotiating with in the Santa Maria groundwater litigation, Thurmond declared that Oceano residents did not have the right to know.

She was wholeheartedly backed in this false conclusion by Directors Lori Angello and Mary Lucey who parroted her statements. The remaining OCSD members sat dumb, apparently ignorant of the most basic requirement that the negotiating parties be identified with specificity in the minutes of the closed sessions and in the board's public agendas summarizing the "closed sessions."

Thurmond has a conflict of interest between her role as the county's lawyer in the Santa Maria groundwater litigation, and as Oceano's CSD attorney. Why? Because there is a conflict in Thurmond's representation

of the OCSD Board, and the County's desire to seize control over that water so it can sell it to someone else.

There is a conflict of interest between Thurmond's representation of individual Oceano employees now employed and Oceano's right to manage its own water resources. The Board has demonstrated that it is not taking care of Oceano's business. That is why they got investigated by the grand jury. That is why Oceano has been permitted for decades to squander the town's resources and funds. The same people who dug that hole are back in office, and no one is doing their homework.

When was the last time you actually got a report by Mary Lucy of a County Flood Control District meeting? When did you ever hear Lori Angello act in any capacity other than as a sound bite? Who is providing facts and solutions to the community?

The County Planning and Building Dept. wants to centralize authority over the water by putting it in the hands of pro-developer James Caruso, and the County's Dept. of Public Works.

In the meantime, Thurmond is being paid by the OCSD and negotiating Oceano's water rights with individuals who were never identified in agenda documents or minutes pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act and the Public Records Act. All we know is that her law firm has sued the OCSD TWICE. When you let Thurmond into the office, you give the opposing attorney—literally—access to your town's confidential legal documents. What is wrong with this picture?

When I discovered this issue and raised it in a public meeting, Thurmond attempted to have a restraining order placed on me. Neither Thurmond or Oceano's general manager, Thomas Geaslen, live in Oceano. Geaslen, who lives in Nipomo, has lobbied for Nipomo at the Halcyon Advisory Committee meetings, even while attending as Oceano's employee.

Thurmond's law firm Hall & Heiatt, still does business for the County of San Luis Obispo, even though the law firm was reported to have lost its contract with the County after Jay Heiatt used money from the County's union negotiator Gail Wilcox to make a private investment in the purchase of real estate in San Luis Obispo.

The County is still represented by Hall & Heiatt through its attorney Thurmond to represent its interests in the ground water litigation. As both the county's legal representative on the ground water litigation and the lawyer for the OCSD, Thurmond has access to OCSD's financial position—and to its individual resident's financial position—which she could then use to undermine Oceano's bargaining position with respect to

its own ability to sell water if it wants to, or to keep the resource to develop its own infrastructure and community. She can use an individual resident's real estate information to undermine their title ownership or claim to water rights, for the purpose of benefitting another community in which she has a personal business interest.

This reeks of a conflict of interest which also violates the rules of attorney conduct.

Despite Thurmond's aggressive and unethical attempt to threaten candidates for OCSD's Board of Directors, as well as its residents and homeowners, we need to study Oceano's water issues and choices.

Do we make the right to water a public right which supercedes the rights of the individual landowner? Do we keep individual water rights and usage a private matter?

Do we keep the status quo; or strike a balance in between?

How do we know what the "status quo" is, if the people we are paying, are working for somebody else?

This is an issue which Thurmond, who is from Bakersfield, is not qualified or authorized to decide on her own.

So here is your first assignment:

Formulate what your position is on the water issue.

Are your water bills claiming you used more water than you actually used? Then go into the District and ASK them to arrange a time when you can be PRESENT at the next reading of your water meter. Record their answer.

Identify BY NAME the public OCSD(?) employee who is reading your water meter. Know what he looks like.

GET A WRITTEN RECORD FROM THE OCSD of the dates, times, and meter readings which that OCSD employee provided to "the District."

Identify BY NAME the person he handed that information to.

TO WHOM did he provide those numbers?

WHO provided those numbers to Celia Ruiz, who has stated that "she inputs the figures she is given into the computer system."

Ask HOW those meter readings are then TRANSLATED INTO A BILL which is printed out and sent to residents by Carol Ann Pardo.

If they can't tell you how the meter at your home gets read and sent to OCSD and spit out as a bill to you at their end, then the employee with whom you are dealing has no right working at the OCSD. Even the computer technician who is getting paid \$75.00 an hour to verify the accuracy of the data in the computer must know how to do this, even if he doesn't know how to change a gasket on his water faucet.

Save your bills, and the envelopes they come in. Talk with your neighbors. And if these OCSD EMPLOYEES have a problem reading your water meter when you are home, and can't give you a close approximation of when they will come out to read the meter, then file a complaint with the Public Utilities Commission and the State Water Board.

They will tell you what to do next. And on that note, I'm going to make some iced tea.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

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2. *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 2:55 pm](#)

QUOTING FROM THE ARTICLE:

The basin, however, could be in overdraft long before the government makes the declaration. That's because to county attorneys and management, overdraft is a "naughty word"—one that they cannot currently use because it would declare a start to a legal war, known as adjudication.

Don't be fooled by the scare tactics of the County over a legal war. In this type of a nightmare, the only way individuals have any hope of having their interests survive the huge power imbalance between the County and the individuals, is by taking it to the courts.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

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3. *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 2:51 pm](#)

QUOTING FROM ARTICLE: *“But last fall, the Board of Supervisors approved the RCS, its findings and recommendations, and established the highest measure of severity, a Level III under the county resource management system. Then in February, the supervisors confirmed that the groundwater levels are dropping throughout the basin and that pumping has reached or is quickly approaching its “perennial yield.” They did not say the basin was in overdraft.”*”

Nipomo Mesa was declared a level 3 a couple of years ago. This was AFTER Nipomo CSD, the City of Santa Maria, and many other interests had gone through an epic lawsuit, and adjudicated, a huge lawsuit over the water use in the Santa Maria-Nipomo-Five-Cities water basin. The County will not use the term “overdraft.” Ever.

The County will also not stop pushing for housing development in Paso, just like they haven’t in Nipomo, even though Nipomo Mesa was declared a level 3 severity for water resources. This is because Paso and the Nipomo Mesa area are the only ones with large blocks of land specified for high-density residential development. Since the County is required by the State to shove in a certain amount of high-density residential development, Paso and Nipmo WILL be massively developed in the future, whether they have the water or not.

The County will make development deals where a developer can “offset” the amount of water their development will need (therefore, they can still build the development) if they retrofit “X” amount of toilets in older homes, or to other water-conservation measures. However, the deal is brokered with the DEVELOPERS, and who knows if it saves any water at all.

And the County aren’t the “bad guys.” This is a requirement by the state.

Like or Dislike:  0  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

4. *oto* says:

[09/08/2011 at 3:20 am](#)

This is great. An excellent reporter tackling one of the most important and complex issues of our time. And what appears to be a knowledgeable group of bloggers helping to add facts to the discussion. Now, let’s cut through the B.S. of some of the interviewees in this article:

“Senior Planner James Caruso says the health of the (Paso Robles groundwater) basin...is in jeopardy....County planners are working to help people understand the severity of the water crisis but their power to fix the problem is limited, they say....The basin goes into overdraft this year, according to “Scenario 1” in the

Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Resource Capacity Study (RCS), identified by Caruso as the “most likely” situation.”

The Planning Dept. ‘s power to fix the problem is limited?! Here’s a solution: why don’t they start requiring developers to adhere to the community’s local area specific plan, instead of violating it up one side and down the other with housing tracts so large, the local water supply can’t support the size of the development!

Let’s start with Caruso’s pet developers, like King, Pace and Geihs?

Geihs was the former Pismo city attorney before he got the boot, according to a former city council member, “for suing too much, and charging too much money.” His sons (a lawyer and a developer, like their father Paul Geihs,) were able to schmooze planning department employees like Caruso, Kami Griffin, and Glenn Marshall into multi-family developments which violated local area specific plans up one side and down the other.

These employees aggressively supported developers’ plans to develop adjacent to Arroyo Grande Creek, when developing within 25 feet of a stream was not permitted because of its negative impact on the stream.

They allowed development of 28 condominiums in Oceano when the maximum allowable number of houses on the same square footage of land was limited to 15.

The development was put in on a residential two-way “collector” street less than twenty feet wide. Did the planners provide for widening the street to accommodate the increased traffic and vehicles? Hell, no!, With no additional off-street parking, and no provision for vehicles entering and exiting the driveway to the development, they should rename the street Fender Bender Lane instead of Bellridge Way. But they didn’t stop there. They did the same thing on the other side of the street, as well. But that was Guiton property and planners do what will benefit them personally, I’ll bet.

Who cares about the existing residents, their animals and their kids when money is flowing like wine to the planning department? Who cares if the street is too narrow to safely accommodate the traffic, and you are forced to drive down the middle of this two-way street to avoid hitting the parked cars?

The driveway leading to one of these developments is situated less than 20 feet from the intersection of Bellridge and Old Hwy. One. That location is situated on a hill, at one end of a bridge, with a left turn lane that dumps cars right at the entrance to the driveway as they turn left onto Bellridge. So, the drivers can’t see vehicles coming out of the driveway, or pulling away from the curb until they are right on them. It is essentially, a blind curve. At that part of Bellridge, of course, there is no sidewalk, because there is no place to put the sidewalk. It’s taken up by parked cars. So, if you happen to be a pedestrian, and you happen to be on that

side of the street, you are taking your life in your hands just trying to walk around the block or cross the street. There is no provision for the safety of pedestrians. Do you think the planning department cares when money is waved in front of them. Hell, no!

They allowed developers to count the driveway as “open space.” Then, they convinced the Board of Supervisors to eliminate ANY requirement to provide “open space” in order to mitigate overcrowding in the neighborhoods where multiresidential developments were taking place. The Sups just tossed that requirement a couple of meetings ago—at the suggestion of the County planning department.

Then there’s Blacklake and the Santa Margarita Ranch development....

“South County residents knew they had a water crisis on their hands when wells began to fail, pumps burnt out, and people ran out of water....” They weren’t the only ones a little slow on the uptake: the Planning Dept. was just as deaf, dumb and blind to the lack of water resources this side of the county line. But they okayed the water guzzling, chemical ridden lawns to be put in for the Blacklake golf course, and all those houses. When the old timers saw the water table sucked dry, and the inhabitants of those half a million dollar homes could not drink water out of the tap without getting sick, did the Planning Dept.’s “senior planners” take heed? They could care less. They are drunk with power! Who needs drinking water!

And they let the developers keep on building. After bulldozing acres of Eucalyptus trees that shaded the Mesa’s wildlife and alluvial streams and pools, the planning department okayed another thousand homes to be built across from the Tosco oil in one fell swoop. The Planning department never really planned where they were going to get water for all those homes. Or did they think they could take it from some other community less sophisticated than San Luis Obispo?

The Planning Dept. not only pushed for the deceptively advertized “Woodlands” on the Nipomo Mesa, but discussed just how they were going to put yet another mega development in the same area by selling it as “an environmental enhancement project” to the departments from whom they had to get PERMITS.

“One defendant with water rights at stake is the Nipomo Community Services District. District director Mike Winn says adjudication has cost South County residents time and money.” Well, one person who’s making money on it is Mike Winn, ’cause he’s lawyer and he’s a member of the Nipomo Community Services District.

And if you think Mike Winn is not pro-development just because he’s the “moderator” for the Water Resources Advisory Committee, then you oughta’

click your little red shoes and fly right back to OZ 'cause you're still dreamin', Hon.

Winn, like Oceano, wants Nipomo to be able to pay for its "infrastructure." But Nipomo has put the cart before the horse, and you can't develop when you don't have the water to sustain it. Instead, you have to improve the town you already have, before you bulldoze the rest of that natural habitat to the point where the water runs right off of it like water off a duck's back. No trees, no environment, no percolation, no water.

As for Paso living off of Lake Nacimiento, that's not a dream, that's insanity. We've just come out of another major drought which saw the Lake drop to 30 per cent of its capacity. Thirty per cent! If you think Paso—in addition to the communities that surround the Lake—can suck 6,000 acre feet a year out of Lake Nacimiento, you are wrong. The last couple of years' rains have brought the Lake back from the brink of extinction. Paso has quadrupled in population in twenty years. We simply cannot keep developing at a rate faster than our environment can sustain.

People complain about agriculture and the wine industry, and they may have a point. Alcohol is not food. It is a money maker for the few, a delight to many, and the most prolific disease on the American landscape.

The ag industry is the elephant in this room. It is the only group that doesn't have to meter its water usage. Should the wine industry have the same privileges as those which are given to food production?

Agriculture is the only industry that doesn't have to treat its chemical runoff. I was surprised to learn that alluvial runoff from farms in the Arroyo Grande and Oceano area isn't treated. Instead, rains and irrigation water send insecticides, animal waste and other industrial pollutants directly into San Luis Obispo's creeks and coastline. I thought irrigation ditches sent water through some kind of treatment process. That was my "city girl's" view of the world. I did not know better until I took advantage of Oceano's "open house" at the wastewater treatment plant. (Cowboys, if you want to know of she's the woman of your dreams, take her out to the local treatment plant, and if she doesn't head for the hills, you'll know you've got a keeper....)

The current practice and policy— that the volume of water used by agricultural operations shall remain unregulated—is based upon the idea that the water used for food production is water used for the greatest public benefit. The thinking was that regulating ag water usage would be like regulating how much food you could produce.

But the unspoken corollary to unregulated ag water usage is that the owner of agricultural land—the private landowner—owns all the groundwater underlying the land, and the greater the water usage, the greater the private entitlement.

But the wine industry is not the food industry. So if wine crops are going to expand that industry's use of the County's water resources, that usage should be monitored, taxed and contained accordingly. The hope is that the wine industry's cutting edge water conservation and reclamation practices will set an example for other industrial users.

Perhaps that is the place to start, when discussing agriculture's rights and responsibilities with respect to the region's groundwater. One thing seems obvious to me: industrial pollutants, which are the necessary evil that comes with large farms and food production, should be contained and treated by the same farm or ranch that uses them.

I remember when Paso's biggest agricultural crop was alfalfa, because it didn't take much water or chemicals to grow. Fruit trees were not allowed to be grown on acreage because it took too much water to grow trees. That is how vines became so popular. They took less water to grow, so everyone grew grapes. It didn't take long to figure out that you could get more money from the crop by making wine, and it was a Hell of a lot easier than raising cattle. But how much is too much? This issue is ripe for discussion....

How much development is too much? Perhaps the answer is not to develop enough to pay for your water and sewer infrastructure, but rather to develop to the point where you can still drink the water that comes out of your tap.

Like or Dislike:  32  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *danika* says:

[09/08/2011 at 6:07 am](#)

I remember Tenaco West, the almond processing plant on Spring Street. Lodi Nut Company also had growers in Paso. Nuts were a popular crop in Paso area.

Like or Dislike:  7  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *racket* says:

[09/08/2011 at 6:45 am](#)

I thought alfalfa was oft maligned as a water hog? So I checked.

Google says 36 inches of water annually.

That sounds like a lot. How much water for grape vines?

That's the only "fact" in your comment I checked.


Like or Dislike:  1  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Harumph* says:

[09/08/2011 at 7:25 am](#)

And you can get four to six harvests off of a alfalfa field per year for that water use, versus the vineyards one harvest.

Like or Dislike:  12  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *racket* says:

[09/08/2011 at 7:52 am](#)

1) Upon reflection, I am thinking the O.P. was really referring to oat hay, or barley, which are dry farmed.

2) Harumph: If you convert the crop to dollars, which seems like a fair way to make decisions, I would guess 4-6 cuttings of alfalfa are less valuable than the single winegrapes. Just saying.

Like or Dislike:  3  3

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *interest* says:

[09/08/2011 at 3:07 pm](#)

Given average rainfall grapes in the north county need varying amounts of supplemental water. Some are dry farmed, the balance need between 6 to 18 inches of additional water here. Most quality farmed grapes use < 12 inches.

When you are converting to \$ please consider the value added processing that takes place, generally here in the community. A bale of alfalfa usually stays a bale of alfalfa.

Don't forget one of our most exciting crops "lawns". The fescue we grow in the north county, when irrigated properly, green yearlong, needs about 50 to 60 inches of added water and can be harvested weekly.

Like or Dislike:  10  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 1:41 pm](#)

In addition, as you said, many local vineyards are dry-farmed year-round.

I don't know many alfalfa fields that are dry farmed year round.



Like or Dislike:  0  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Josixpack* says:

[09/09/2011 at 4:12 am](#)

Theres ur answer
MONEY!!!

Like or Dislike:  3  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Harumph* says:

[09/10/2011 at 12:16 pm](#)

No worries.

Yes, market price for wine grapes may be higher than for alfalfa.

However, we are in a feed shortage right now and I do remember a time when vineyards were a minority in north county.

Like or Dislike:  2  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *interest* says:

[09/11/2011 at 2:50 pm](#)

Oh for the good old day's.....maybe we should roll the clock back to the early 80's when our Alfalfa acreage was 5 times what it is now and the net ground water pumping, on low rainfall years was 20% more than it is now, and about at current levels on wet years.....we could feed lots of cows!

Funny how the water use in the early 80's was left out of the Groundwater Supply and Demand reported in the article.....there's nothing like a little incomplete data to whip up anxiety among the uninformed.

And Jo, of course it's about money. We all need to eat and water is a limited resource.

We are all obligated to use our water wisely.

Like or Dislike:  5  4

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 1:44 pm](#)

The problem is one that we find in California: farmers are growing crops that are not suited to our climate. Supplemental irrigation can allow those crops to be grown, but farmers (and residents with their nice big lawns) have not been paying the true price for the water they use for these purposes.

That is coming to a screeching halt in the future.

With Nipomo CSD's new water rates, some of their property owners will be paying twice as much for water as they are now.

Interestingly, Nipomo CSD's agriculture customers, who use, by far, the most water per customer, will still have only one flat rate, no matter how much they use. Single-family residence homeowners, however, will have to pay out the nose if they use more than Nipomo CSD thinks they should.

Like or Dislike:  0  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 1:39 pm](#)

1) Many SLOCo vineyards are dry-farmed.

2) Many people don't know this, but alfalfa is the "reference crop" farmers and others use to figure out how much irrigation water they have to apply to their fields (or home landscapes) to make up for the amount of water the crop (or home landscaping) has used since the last irrigation.

They do this by looking up the evapotranspiration rate from a weather station (either their own or CIMIS stations in California). These weather stations have to collect many weather parameters in order to figure out the evapotranspiration rate.

They then look up the "Kc" for the plants (crop or landscape) they need to irrigate. The Kc is the coefficient which translates the ET for alfalfa to the ET for their own crop/plants, and from that they

can then do the calculations to figure out how much irrigation to apply.

3) State-of-the-art irrigation systems (both for crops and home landscapes) now link by satellite to download the information and calculations to figure out the amount of irrigation that needs to be applied, and the irrigation system automatically applies it.

Just a random firing of the ol' cranial neurons....

Like or Dislike:  0  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *easymoney* says:

[09/08/2011 at 7:15 am](#)

Great post oto.

The dysfunctional county departments not following their own rules, thus allowing unlimited growth and the broken management of the existing infrastructure for funding sources is historic.

Planning says it can't stop people from building (new permits are a funding source) whether there is sufficient water or not, public works says it needs to do more studies (another funding source) yet the studies are a compilation of anecdotal reports by other, the state mandates redundancy of water supplies in order to prevent over draft in a drought and for build out (a politically appointed department making another funding source), the encouragement of vast acreages of luxury wine grapes (another funding source in the form of tax dollars) all add up to a long history of the county and cities doing all they can to promote growth and vineyards in order to boost the county coffers.

Bottom line is, there was once sufficient ground water for both agriculture based on historic dry farming practices and limited growth based on realistic demands on infrastructure and population levels.

“How much development is too much? Perhaps the answer is not to develop enough to pay for your water and sewer infrastructure, but rather to develop to the point where you can still drink the water that comes out of your tap”.

And just how much wine do we really need? How many grapes were grown last year and watered, yet not picked because the market is slow?

Like or Dislike:  13  2



[Log in to Reply](#)

- *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 1:48 pm](#)

The County allowed Trilogy to be built because the developers said that the water Trilogy would use was coming from a different, SPECIAL water basin, and not the water basin used by the rest of Nipomo Mesa and the larger ground basin from Santa Maria to the Five Cities (the latter is the one that has been involved with so many lawsuits).

Ironically, Trilogy's CIMIS station (the weather station which gives information you can use to figure out how much you need to irrigate your home landscape or crops) is within throwing distance of the Pacific/Nipomo Mesa coastline. They are sitting awfully danged close to the ocean and will be greatly at risk to be one of the first to suck up seawater into the aquifer.

Like or Dislike:  0  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *MaryMalone* says:

[09/22/2011 at 2:34 pm](#)


Any crop that fails, or cannot be brought to market for a profit, will not be sold at market. So that is not a valid argument against wine growing.

Whether you would rather have fields filled with grape vines or high-density housing is a personal choice.

In our county, unfortunately, the only places left to shove the high-density housing required by the state is either in Paso or Nipomo. Despite Nipmo Mesa being at a level of severity 3 risk for availability of water resources (declared by the County a few years ago), they are still looking to cram in masses of high-density homes.

If I lived in Nipmo, I'd rather have vineyards as neighbors than large developments of high-density homes. It certainly would be less of a risk to the aquifer, less pollution, less noise, and less traffic.

However, that's just my opinion.

Like or Dislike: 0 1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Harumph* says:

[09/08/2011 at 7:23 am](#)

Lets do remember that vineyards, allegedly, use little water through drip systems, and winery's, allegedly, have high water usage. Not every vineyard is a winery.

Like or Dislike: 2 3

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *rallyraid* says:

[09/08/2011 at 7:28 am](#)

Who is it behind the majority of these developments, the design, engineering and permitting processes in this county? Who was the lead man for south county's flood control? I recall during a Karen Velie/Congalton radio show some time ago multiple callers who are local contractors called in complaining that if they didn't go thru a particular "engineering firm" for approval you'd never get your plans moving forward. I've also heard similar complaints first hand from contractors and business owners locally.

Water shortages on the Mesa and Paso you say? who was it behind the design and engineering on the Woodlands Development with 1320 homes and the Trilogy Development by "Shea homes" both of Nipomo and the River Oaks a 270 acre development in Paso? who is it for 25 years has provided management services for that Oceano sewage plant you visited and as we have recently learned potentially allowed unknown amounts of sewage to flow into our ocean while charging hundreds of thousands yearly for their inept services depleting millions of tax dollars from public coffers?

The Wallace Group.

Like or Dislike: 19 1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *BeenThereDoneThat* says:

[09/08/2011 at 8:07 am](#)

I read the first three quarters of this post as nothing more than a rant against building. O.k. so point taken you don't like building. Here is the rub with your point that all that evil housing is going to be as big or bigger problem than ag.

In the years mentioned in the chart in article it took us through the biggest building time in residential I have seen in my 30+ years living here. Now when you compare in that chart the Ag use to Urban use, Ag went up 27% in that time while Urban went up 21%. Hmm sounds like Ag used more water to me and during a large boom.

On your point about Nacimiento. You imply that it is down because of drought. WRONG. In the early part of the eighties the lake was always quite full. Starting in the late eighties and early ninties Monterey County started to release (use more of their water rights) for the first time since the damn was build. They have continued to do so.

SLO County cities that have build the pipeline are using the 17,000 acre feet signed to us back in the fifties when we signed over all our rights to the rest of the water but we do have the right to the 17,000 before they would pump the lake dry as you state. As far as that (pumping it dry) did you notice how in just one rainy season that overpumped lake you state came up over 40 feet? That's because that lake has one of the best watersheds in the entire state!! I find it hard to believe that the lake would go dry as you state.

I do like the last quarter of your post when you get over your development bashing and back to the subject at hand.

This depletion of the water supply continues even though building has been at a standstill for almost 3+ years. Why? because the vines keep going in and the wine industry keeps growing. That hasn't stopped, hence making your arguement about development mute.

Like or Dislike:  17  5

[Log in to Reply](#)

o *mbactivist1* says:

[09/08/2011 at 9:06 am](#)

Fantastic writeup, Oto. Developers and other moneyed interests have a death grip on our local governments, and it's time to boot their buddies out of office and vote in some people who will look out for the interests of the people.

A lot of us believe that the City of Morro Bay's claims that nitrates in well water come from agriculture are bunk (see SLO Cost Journal article, "Nitrates in Morro Bay Municipal Wells – New Facts Emerge" at slocoastjournal.com). So, how does this tie into the discussion? We believe that the City wants to sue the farmers and drive them out of business in order to free up the water that is now used to grow crops – yes, so that it can be used to support development. This, according to a Farm Bureau member I have spoken to, is happening all around the state.

If the developer interests got their way, we not only would run out of water even faster than we are now. Food availability and prices would be affected as well.

Like or Dislike:  16  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *titlenine9* says:

[09/12/2011 at 7:53 am](#)

How about considering water banking

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/instream-flows/wtrbank.html>

<http://www.azwaterbank.gov/>

<http://ag.arizona.edu/arec/pubs/facultypubs/ewsr-Banks-final-5-12-10.pdf>

Like or Dislike:  0  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

5. *Harumph* says:

[09/07/2011 at 6:11 pm](#)

We can thank Michael Hoover for helping with the shortage. Wonder how much he pocketed for this

1000 gal/min well in Creston (picture at bottom of page

<http://www.hoovergeo.com/about.html>).

Like or Dislike:  12  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

6. *mbactivist1* says:

[09/07/2011 at 2:24 pm](#)

Paso Robles appears to be in a situation comparable to that of Morro Bay. Despite the counter-claims of developers and their cronies in government, there is a very serious water crisis in Morro Bay, and in recent years, the City has had to really scramble to deliver water to its customers. Unfortunately, at times, some rather questionable actions have been taken. Events related to the city's Chorro Valley wells are a good example.

The State Water Board long ago issued "decision 1633", which forbids the City to use its Chorro Valley municipal wells when the surface flow in Chorro Creek is less than 1.4 cubic feet per second. The surface flow of the creek was designated as an indicator of the health of the aquifer, which had been negatively impacted by over-pumping.

The City of Morro Bay has, since 1997, failed to comply with the Water Board decision. The City even hired a consultant to attempt to get the Water Board order rescinded by "proving" that the use of the wells did not impact creek flow by conducting a "stream flow interference study".

However, the consultant was caught by residents conducting the so-called study when there was no stream flow. The stream was completely dry at the time, so there was no flow to be interfered with! Residents complained to the City Council and the "study" was halted, but not before a great deal of taxpayer money and over 2 million gallons of water were wasted.

A year or so later, the same consultant tried again. This time, the stream was running, but the consultant and the city failed to get the required permits, and were "busted" by Department of Fish and Game staff who put a stop to the second "study" attempt.

Residents in the area of City well 11A report that it is still being used in violation of the Water Board order.

Like or Dislike:  13  2



[Log in to Reply](#)

7. *KimM* says:

[09/07/2011 at 12:44 pm](#)

Oh brother. I WENT to the public Paso Groundwater Basin meetings. This is where the (partial) truth came out. If you were there & paying attention, you

found out that all the dire predictions were based on one low well & a computer projection from there into the future of ALL wells getting lower & lower ad infinitum... You also found out that they only have spotty data going back a few years, so they had to project back into the past (i.e. completely fabricate the “historical data”) in order to then turn around & project back out into the future... What nonsense. This is not science. It’s propaganda. If you were there, you also got to hear the hydrologist (who actually worked on the project) object to all their charts, graphs & dire predictions... You also got to see them use the Delphi technique on the participants to mold public opinion in the direction they wanted it to go (i.e. “The sky is falling, the sky is falling. We need more government regulation. Please create a whole new bloated government agency that will put Big Brother, real-time monitors on all our wells & tax & fine us into oblivion in order to force us off our land & into overcrowded cities & help the United Nations implement their Agenda 21 plan of completely eliminating property rights...”) But did any of this information make it out to the public? Of course not. This is the problem with writing “news” articles based on information generated by a quasi-government agency trying to justify its existence & ensure future funding, etc. Did the reporter attend any of the groundwater basin meetings & witness any of the shifty goings-on for herself? Did she listen to & interview any of the savvy farmers who attended & firmly objected to the goings on? Did she follow the money trail back to its federal source & expose the strings attached? Has she even heard of Agenda 21 & its major implementing arm: ICLEI? Does she even realize the danger we’re all in if these UN policies get implemented through the back door?

Hot debate. What do you think?  17  28

[Log in to Reply](#)

o *Cindy* says:

[09/07/2011 at 1:39 pm](#)

I wonder how many people are aware of the UN Agenda 21 + iclei? I wasn’t fully aware and started to do a little research. I would be interested in what others think about all this. The following offers quite a bit of info but there are many sites addressing it and I didn’t scratch the surface.

<http://www.freedomadvocates.org/>



Like or Dislike:  7  14

[Log in to Reply](#)

o *connected one* says:

[09/08/2011 at 4:16 pm](#)

I'm not so sure that water studies and "hydrologist" provide accurate information. When the Woodlands was going thru the county process they had conflicting water studies, one indicated there was plenty of water and one indicating it would put the aquifer in overdraft. California is a desert state and if we don't start paying attention to the clues in front of us before a crisis we will all be paying the price.

Like or Dislike:  1  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Josixpack* says:

[09/09/2011 at 4:16 am](#)

And which one was produced by which/whom? They went with the developers study...money on it...

Like or Dislike:  3  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Josixpack* says:

[09/24/2011 at 8:07 am](#)

STATED GOALS FROM ICLEI: AND THIS IS SO SCARY TO YOU!??? YOU'D RATHER HAVE PRIVATE COMMERCIAL INTERESTS CONTROLLING EXPLOITING EVERYONE/THINGS WATER UNTIL IT IS POLLUTE OR GONE?

Access to clean and affordable drinking water is a fundamental right. As such, governments have an obligation to ensure water and sanitation services for all. The primary obligation and duty of government is to facilitate the satisfaction of basic human needs and to promote public health. The production and distribution of good quality drinking water and the simultaneous, safe treatment and disposal of sewage, waste and contaminated effluents are prerequisites for productive community life. They must be provided to all and be protected, monitored and governed by accountable public authorities.

Water must be governed as a common good. As the source of life, water resources must be governed within a framework of shared responsibility. Shared responsibility involves an obligation on the part of all people and institutions, both individually and collectively, to value and protect water

resources. Local authorities must lead this movement for responsible water governance. While water resources are amenable to public, community or private management, they need to be controlled, secured and governed by accountable public authorities or recognized indigenous or traditional authorities. In order to promote responsible water governance, governments must support the participation of all stakeholders as partners, with full information, in protecting watershed areas and in determining the water and environmental sanitation services that they receive.

Water must be protected as the ecological foundation of life.

Commensurate with human uses, water has value in its natural state and must be protected to sustain all forms of life. Water must be utilized within the framework of ecological carrying capacities. Pollution should be prevented at its source, and polluted water should be reclaimed and reused. Conservation of water resources must be promoted. Human activities should not threaten the long-term sustainability of a natural water source.

Water must be managed as a finite economic resource. Charges for water and related services must, in aggregate, reflect the true value of water resources and consider both the current and future cost of service provision. Water should not be wasted. The waste or pollution of water must bear an economic cost. The financial responsibility for water must be both collective and individual. Prices for water and water services must be structured to permit all people to secure their basic human water needs. Water must be preserved as a shared cultural asset. Water is part of a shared human heritage. Access to water for sacred, religious, cultural and recreational purposes should be available to all. The management of water should consider socio-cultural traditions and should contribute to the strengthening of peace and solidarity among people, communities, countries, genders and generations.

Like or Dislike:  2  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Moderator* says:

[09/25/2011 at 12:21 pm](#)

The United Nations discussion headed into 'way' paranoid extremist territories and has been deleted. If you have questions about moderation an Email rather than a shout out in thread would be much appreciated. Thanks so much.

Like or Dislike:  0  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

8. *Creepshow* says:

[09/07/2011 at 9:56 am](#)

The county says it does not plan to declare overdraft in the meantime, even if the basin is in-fact in overdraft.

Like or Dislike:  20  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

9. *Nancy* says:

[09/07/2011 at 9:31 am](#)

In Atascadero, if a parcel doesn't own water rights the AMWC will just issue illegal shares to the parcel holder and service them despite the lack of water rights, they claim that annexing the parcels entitles water rights but it doesn't. I sure hope somebody does something about our AMWC directors mighty soon. I know that a group has been to some gov agencies about it and there is rumbling going on behind the scenes. I was told that the FBI asked question's about the AMWC giving illegal water rights to some of Gearharts projects and now the city is lying about many of the Eagle Ranch parcels having been colony lot's with rights to shares in the water company.



Like or Dislike:  17  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

10. *racket* says:

[09/07/2011 at 8:40 am](#)

What I am reading between the lines is that the municipalities are scared of adjudication because it may found that their claim on the water is BELOW the claims of some of the ag users. Which would put them in a tremendous pickle.

Like or Dislike:  17  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

11. *Cindy* says:

[09/07/2011 at 8:26 am](#)

So much for paying city staff and planners to analyze these projects and prepare objective CEQA reports that consider water availability before they rubber stamp EVERYTHING. Has anybody ever seen a project turned down for water considerations?

Like or Dislike:  20  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

12. *BeenThereDoneThat* says:

[09/07/2011 at 8:11 am](#)

I had (key word HAD) been standing up for wineries in the past thinking that with drip systems they are at least using the water efficiently. Wellllllllllll, I was SHOCKED when talking to a wine grower in the recent past to learn that the water usage is NOT in the growing but in the producing of the wine. It takes 720 liters of water to produce a 750 ml bottle of wine. Now you think how many cases a winery will produce and we are talking some significant amounts.

So it has got me rethinking about the value of the wine industry in this county. Yes it is making us money on tourism but at what cost to us the water users and taxpayers that will have to find other sources to support this industry. Now the question becomes is it worth it? That my friends is the 10 million dollar question.

Oh on the liters if you are like me from the U.S. tables of measures and not metric that 720 liters is 920 GALLONS!!

And the city of Paso gets excited about people washing down their driveways because of the water flowing down the drain? Talk about water flowing down the drain.

Like or Dislike:  25  4

[Log in to Reply](#)

o *racket* says:

[09/07/2011 at 8:47 am](#)

I think your case would be more relevant if you compared apples to apples:

The driveway carwash is performed with water that has been cleaned to drinking water standards. It is valuable not only because it is water, but also because it has been extensively treated. Contrast this with private well

water that is pumped out of the ground, used for whatever winery practice, then returned to the ground.

This brings up the issue of “use.” Water, as used by wineries or car washers is not a single-use resource. The winery waste water is available for reuse after it goes through their leechfield, or settling pond, or is dumped on the ground. Other than a little evaporation, it all returns to the system. Same with the car-wash rinsate. It goes into the storm drain, and ultimately into the Salinas River where it either perks down into the water table or flows down to irrigate Monterey county fields. In neither case is the water “lost” or consumptively used.

Like or Dislike:  10  16

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *BeenThereDoneThat* says:

[09/07/2011 at 9:00 am](#)

Well by your analogy we should then have plenty of water and not be in overdraft. You know that the people who use it to consume, the waste goes to the treatment plant and the liquids (after treated) are returned to the groundwater supply. Same with the dishes they wash and the showers they take. And the car I wash goes to the Salinas so it perks down, so again by your analogy WHY are we short of water then??

Like or Dislike:  14  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *racket* says:


[09/07/2011 at 9:21 am](#)

I think you are short of “clean” water more than you are short of water. I suspect there is something with hydrological flows that once you pump the water up 700 feet and put it in the Salinas River, it goes to Monterey in larger portion than it goes back to the ancient water table. But I really don’t know.

Conservatively using water is always a good idea. For everyone. In my mind, it is more important to

conservatively use the water that you have expensively purified.

WHY we are short of water is because there are more grape vines, Paso Roblans, Templetonians, etc.

Like or Dislike:  17  4

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *rallyraid* says:

[09/07/2011 at 8:47 am](#)

Tourism is great and it brings in lots of money in, but just how many residents of SLO county benefit from tourism....seriously? No disillusion poll that says we'd dry up and blow away if it wasn't for the wine industry, If that was the case why is Fresno or Bako still in existence?. Sure it benefits some but it screws more and the wine industry can, like everybody else become "self sustaining" utilizing "renewable resources" like everything else is being forced to do. Recycle that process water,recycle that effluent from your treatment plants. Its not the public's problem to foot the bill either as were the ones footing the bill for our own problems and yours at times. Its high time they do their part and stop whining about how the frost ruined a crop of grapes and they need a tax payer handout to recoup losses, handouts don't pay my mortgage or buy my gas when prices go up after a another hurricane in the gulf region do they?

Now, would anyone like to sniff a nice glass of Pinor'effluent'e 2011?



Like or Dislike:  17  3

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *BeenThereDoneThat* says:

[09/07/2011 at 11:11 am](#)

A family member who reads my posts was nice enough to point out my mathematical error I posted in hurrying to work. I posted 920 Gallons. It should be about 190 gallons. Sorry.

Like or Dislike:  6  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *standup* says:

[09/07/2011 at 11:49 am](#)

Wrong Mr. Math, that would be 192 gallons. There are 3.75 liters per gallon. $720/3.75=192$

Like or Dislike:  0  9

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *BeenThereDoneThat* says:

[09/07/2011 at 5:21 pm](#)

REALLY??? REALLY??? Wow off by two gallons. Again did on fly and I said ABOUT 190. Thanks for the math lesson that REALLY wasn't ABOUT needed.

Like or Dislike:  7  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *winedude* says:

[09/07/2011 at 11:09 pm](#)

Actually, you are quite correct at 190 gallons. Mr. standup rectal-pore doesn't know any better, obviously, but there are 3.79 liters (actually 3.7854) per gallon. Don't know where he got 3.75 but it's blatantly wrong.

Now, about your numbers. 720 liters per 750 ml. bottle is equal to 960 gallons of water per liter of wine. Now, multiply by 3.7854 to get gallons of water used per gallons of wine produced. This number has now climber to 3,634 gal. water/gallon wine produced. I can tell you in no uncertain terms that this number is virtually impossible. Think about it. You only need 6,000 tons of grapes to make a million gallons of wine. To make a million gallons, are you saying that a winery would use 3,634,000 gallons? No way! That's enough water to cover a chunk of ground about the size of a football field under 11 feet of water. Having been in the wine biz since the early 1970's, I do know whereof I speak. If my numbers are wrong, someone please show me how.

Like or Dislike:  4  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *winedude* says:

[09/07/2011 at 11:12 pm](#)

OOPS...first line of 2nd paragraph should read 720 GALLONS (not liters)...thanks.

Like or Dislike:  2  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *standup* says:

[09/08/2011 at 7:46 am](#)

Wait a minute boys. I didn't see his correction post when I posted. I was just correcting an obvious mistake. Plus I just rounded for simplicity. There was no attack. But since you want to play wine dude, why don't you close your rectal pore where you are speaking from. What a dick you are wine snob.

Like or Dislike:  2  3

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Cindy* says:

[09/08/2011 at 9:52 am](#)

standup, I like you but you started it. You replied to BTDT with the following opening: "Wrong Mr. Math". That was extremely rude. In turn, you got a bunch of thumbs down and called a rectal pore, just suck it up, you deserved it ;)

Gotta admit, that was a new one and pretty funny. No doubt some of us will tuck that one away for the appropriate time.

BTW, This is one of the most informative and interesting threads I've ever seen here.

Like or Dislike:  3  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *winedude* says:

[09/08/2011 at 5:42 pm](#)

Thank you! And to standup, I'm not wine snob at all. I've produced bottles worth as little as \$3.00 and as high as \$75.00. It's all still agricultural post-harvest processing...

Like or Dislike:  0  2

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *standup* says:

[09/09/2011 at 6:37 am](#)

You may not be a wine snob but i still don't appreciate the fact that you called me an ass%%# for a comment that was directed to someone else. But you must admit, you are one of the problems to our overdrafting the groundwater to make your wine.

Like or Dislike:  4  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *Harumph* says:

[09/07/2011 at 6:15 pm](#)

Not just water to put in the bottles, water to clean the equipment. Today, I was at a winery where some kid was having a ball pressing washing bins like water is free.

Like or Dislike:  3  1

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *winedude* says:

[09/07/2011 at 11:20 pm](#)

Say, did you enjoy the wines at the winery you visited today? I don't think that you'd be quite so happy if the wines had microbial defects (perhaps vinegar) from improper winery sanitation. Power washing the bins prior to harvest so that they're clean is the very first line of defense against fungal/bacterial infections coming in with the grapes. No matter how carefully they're picked, a 4x4 macro bin that's full is going to have some crushing of the grapes on the bottom. This "free-run" juice is some of the most valuable juice in the winery and nobody wants it contaminated. Just sayin...

Like or Dislike:  1  4

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *LittleAcorn* says:

[09/08/2011 at 8:13 am](#)

Your liters to gallons equation needs a little refinement. A liter is roughly the same size as a quart, which is how I knew you were off. Using the real conversion factor for 720 liters gives us 190.2 gallons. Still a lot of water when compared to a wine bottle that holds roughly 3/4 of a quart.

Like or Dislike:  1  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

- *LittleAcorn* says:

[09/08/2011 at 8:15 am](#)

Ah heck. You caught the error, I should have read the rest of the responses.

Like or Dislike:  0  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

- o *LittleAcorn* says:

[09/08/2011 at 9:00 am](#)

What I could find on the issue of winery water usage is that the County of Napa assumes a winery will use 6 gallons of water to produce one gallon of wine. Efficient large scale operations are aiming for less than 2 gallons per gallon of wine, but a few wineries that were studied had figures that were more than double of Napa's estimate.

Changing the subject slightly, I was under the impression that farmers stopped growing alfalfa in the Paso area because it got too expensive to pump the water as the water table dropped.

Like or Dislike:  2  0

[Log in to Reply](#)

- 13. *rallyraid* says:

[09/07/2011 at 7:24 am](#)

Well..(no pun intended) lets see. I don't recall any of our golf courses being put on rationing because they create "revenue" for the cities. Nor can I imagine any vineyards ever having to cut back for the same reason, even if they did their success in the alcoholism industry will easily make the payment. That leaves us homeowners who many are barely squeezing by to pay \$30 a foot to sink a deeper well in hopes having enough water to flush the shitter once a week. There may be another option that's likely and that's when our leaders take over the rights to the local aquifers which has happened in numerous locations to "monitor" the status and from no cost water produced by our own wells to liquid gold as were billed dearly for it by the county. This will naturally progress into the demise of our water supplies as the "governing body" who has taken over our water rights does nothing to improve the situation, examples are Paso's treatment plant, south county's problems and Los Osos sewer delima, Morro bay, Cayucos, Cambria to name a few. No new damns, lakes etc, cant drown any weeds or frogs, no new wells because of Nitrate contamination, perhaps a desalination plant and distribution system that never really gets built. This of course will come compliments of the county, Pavo and his band of thieves, local so called "professional service providers" yeah you know who you are, heck perhaps even MWH can get in on it.

Boy, I cant wait to see how this one plays out, you know something good is coming our way.

Like or Dislike:  7  4

[Log in to Reply](#)

14. *easymoney* says:

[09/07/2011 at 7:06 am](#)

The old saying “whiskey is for drinking, water is for fighting over” rings true today.

Over draft and over use of a limited resource, especially by the grape growers and the poor planning and management by the county is very apparent.

<http://www.prcity.com/government/departments/commdev/housing/demographics.asp>

<http://www.pasowine.com/pasorobles/history.php>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paso_Robles,_California

Like or Dislike:  16  2

[Log in to Reply](#)