

San Luis Obispo County  
 Master Water Plan Update  
**WATER PLANNING AREA #9c -- SHANDON**

---

WPA 9c encompasses the watershed bounded by the La Panza Range to the southwest and includes the Estrella Creek watershed to the north. Purveyors include County Service Area No. 16 and the following purveyors:

- Green River MWC
- Phillips Elementary School
- Shandon Rest Stop
- Hearst Corp-Cholame Store

## DEMAND

The development of demands for the San Luis Obispo (SLO) MWP Update involved collection and analysis of four types of existing data: 1) urban demand; 2) agricultural demand; 3) rural demand; and 4) environmental demand. Following the review of existing plans and data, existing demands for each of the four categories were prepared for each of the 12 WPAs. Next, data regarding growth and future water use was analyzed to develop a preferred approach for the development of future water demands. These future demands were then prepared and projected by the same four demand categories for each of the WPAs.

The total existing and future demands for WPA 9c are listed in Table 1. A discussion of demands by each category follows.

**Table 1**  
**WPA 9c Demand Totals by Category<sup>a</sup>**

Category of Demand	Existing Demand (ac-ft/yr)	Projected Demand (ac-ft/yr)
Urban	0	0
Agricultural	20,360	21,890 - 27,190
Rural	720	1,070
Environmental	NA	NA
Subtotal	21,080	22,960 - 28,260

a. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10's.

### Urban Demand

WPA 9c has no urban demand for the purposes of this study.

### Agricultural Demand

This section documents existing and projected Gross Irrigated Water Requirements (GIWRs) for WPA 9c. The existing and projected demand figures relied upon published data and accepted methods, along with information gathered from extension agents, consultants, growers, and irrigation specialists. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the current and projected agricultural water demands for WPA 9c. Anticipated future changes in cropping acreage in the Shandon WPA include a significant increase in vineyard coupled with declining alfalfa. The effect of this anticipated change in acreage contributes to projected increases in agricultural water demand.

**Table 2**  
**Existing GIWR for WPA 9c (AF/Yr).**

<b>Annual Gross Irrigation Water Requirement (AF/Yr)</b>		
<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Average</b>
18,063	22,638	20,361

**Table 3**  
**Projected GIWR for WPA 9c (AF/Yr).**

<b>Projected Annual Gross Irrigation Water Requirement (AF/Yr)</b>		
<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Average</b>
21,886	27,187	24,536

**Procedures and Concepts**

Estimating GIWR for local conditions can be characterized by the following general formula:

$$GIWR = \frac{\text{Crop ET} - \text{Contrib. from rain or shallow water table}}{(1 - \text{Leaching Requirement}) \times \frac{\text{Irrigation Efficiency}}{100}} + \text{Climate Control}$$

This analysis must be completed for each crop group, acreage, and weather pattern to calculate total GIWR (in AF) by WPA (WPA

***Cropping Patterns***

Table 4 summarizes estimates of irrigated cropping acreage for WPA 9c.

**Table 4**  
**Estimated cropping acreage for WPA 9c**

<b>Alfalfa</b>	<b>Permanent</b>		<b>Veg.</b>	<b>Vineyard</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Citrus</b>	<b>Decid.</b>			
1,000	NA	200	600	7,000	8,800

Source: Estimated from annual crop report, county GIS records and pesticide use records.

***Crop Evapotranspiration***

Several UC Cooperative Extension Leaflets describe estimating crop evapotranspiration (ETc) where:

$$ETc = ETo \times Kc$$

ETc is estimated by multiplying the weather factor (ETo) with the crop coefficient (Kc). ETo values for the Paso Robles climate group (49.2 in/yr) were assigned to WPA 9c and Kc values are specific to the crop groupings (see Chapter 2). Yearly ETc totals for the crops in WPA 9c are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Yearly crop evapotranspiration (ft) for each crop group in WPA 9c**

Alfalfa	Permanent		Vegetable	Vineyard
	Citrus	Decid.		
3.4	NA	3.1	1.5	1.4

***Effective Rainfall***

WPA 9c was assigned the Shandon rainfall group (10.5 in/yr) for the purpose of estimating effective rainfall (See chapter 2). Ranges of percentage of effective precipitation were applied to the crop groupings in WPA 9c and are listed in Table 6. Higher percentages were assigned to the deeper rooted crops according to their larger rootzone water holding capacity.

**Table 6**  
**Assigned ranges of typical effective precipitation for crop groups in WPA 9c**

Crop Group	Effective Precipitation Range (%) <sup>1</sup>	
	Low	High
Alfalfa	40	60
Permanent		
Deciduous	40	60
Vegetable <sup>2</sup>	15	25
Vineyard	30	50

1. As a percentage of total annual rainfall.
2. 2x adjustment factor for multiple cropping.

***Frost Protection***

Irrigation water is commonly applied for frost protection on grapes and strawberries in WPA9c. The amount of water used for frost protection varies from season to season depending on the weather, and it varies from farm to farm depending on the system application rate. For the purpose of calculating applied water, 0.5 AF/Ac/Year is utilized for the water applied for frost protection on grapes. For the purpose of calculating applied water, 0.8 AF/Ac/Year is utilized for the water applied for frost protection on strawberries

***Leaching Requirements***

The amount of extra irrigation water, which needs to be applied to satisfy the leaching requirement for a particular crop, depends on the salt tolerance of the crop and the irrigation water quality. Ground water quality in San Luis Obispo County is typically adequate for crop production and does not necessitate additional *irrigation* water applied for leaching since it is typically satisfied by normal rainfall. Chipping et al. 1993 reports that of the wells tested in the Paso Robles Ground Water Basin Study, most of the wells tested have EC levels < 1.0 dS/m. Given these water qualities and salt tolerances typical with central coast crops, leaching requirements would be satisfied by rainfall.

***Irrigation Efficiencies***

Irrigation efficiency can be expressed by the following relationship:

$$\text{Irrigation Efficiency} = \text{Distribution Uniformity} \times (1 - \text{Losses})$$

The Cachuma Resource Conservation District routinely conducts irrigation evaluations in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties and are excellent resource in describing the actual performances of irrigation systems in the region. Irrigation efficiencies were assigned

to crop group according to prevalent irrigation system type and knowledge of typical local uniformities (Table 7).

**Table 7**  
**Assigned irrigation efficiency averages for each crop group in WPA 9c**

Crop Group	Irrigation Efficiency Range (%)	
	Low	High
Alfalfa	60	70
Permanent	60	70
Vegetable	65	75
Vineyard	65	75

***Existing Gross Irrigation Water Requirement by Crop Group***

Existing GIWRs for WPA 9c are summarized in Table 8. The ranges provided in Table 8 do not represent the extremes in GIWR, but do represent the typical ranges in a normal year given local variations in effective precipitation and irrigation efficiencies. Table 2 summarizes the current agricultural water demands for WPA 9c.

**Table 8**  
**Summary of Existing GIWR for WPA 9c by crop group (AF/Ac/Yr)**

Alfalfa		Permanent- Deciduous		Vegetable		Vineyard	
Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
4.1	5.1	3.6	4.5	1.8	2.2	1.8	2.3

***Future Gross Irrigation Water Requirements by Crop Group***

Several issues would affect changes in future irrigation water requirements:

- Changes in cropping acreage and type of crop
- Changes in irrigation methods

**Cropping Patterns**

Trends in cropping patterns were examined through historical crop reports and previous water use projections completed by the Department of Water Resources. Table 9 summarizes projected crop acreages in WPA 9c.

**Table 9**  
**Projected cropping acreage for WPA 9c**

Alfalfa	Permanent		Veg.	Vineyard	Total
	Citrus	Decid.			
800	0	300	600	10,000	11,700

**Irrigation Methods**

Table 10 reflects the projected irrigation efficiencies by crop group in WPA 9c.

**Table 10**  
**Projected irrigation efficiencies by crop group in WPA 9c**

Crop Group	Irrigation Efficiency Range (%)	
	Low	High
Alfalfa	60	70
Permanent	70	80
Vegetable	70	80
Vineyard	70	80

The same procedures that were utilized to calculate existing agricultural demands were utilized in estimating projected irrigation water requirements. The projected values reflect the changes in cropping acreage and irrigation efficiencies. Table 11 summarizes the projected agricultural water demands for WPA 9c.

**Table 11**  
**Summary of Projected GIWR by crop group for WPA 9c (AF/Ac/Yr)**

Alfalfa		Permanent- Deciduous		Vegetable		Vineyard	
Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
4.1	5.1	3.2	3.9	1.7	2.1	1.8	2.2

## Rural Demand

Rural water demands in the Shandon WPA include dwelling units scattered throughout the hills and valleys. The commercial areas are not included Tables 12 and 13 below. Water is produced in private wells from the groundwater basin in the area.

**Table 12**  
**Current Demand – 1995**

Population	Pop/Du	Houses	Duty (ac-ft/ac)	Demand <sup>a</sup> (ac-ft/yr)
1,235	2.92	423	1.7	720

a. Demand figure has been rounded to the nearest 10<sup>3</sup>s.

**Table 13**  
**Projected Demand – 2020**

Population	Pop/Du	Houses	Duty (ac-ft/ac)	Demand <sup>a</sup> (ac-ft/yr)
1,836	2.92	629	1.7	1,070

a. Demand figure has been rounded to the nearest 10<sup>3</sup>s.

## Data Deficiencies

The following additional data would improve the accuracy of this study:

- **Commercial.** A few commercial activities exist in the rural areas that were not accounted for in the urban demand. It represents a very small percentage of the total water used.

- **Dwelling Units.** The study was based upon population numbers, with an estimate of dwelling units derived from population figures divided by persons per household. Demand should be based upon a count of dwelling units by WPA. This information would be derived from assessor data.
- **Certificate Lots.** Many parcels of land in the area may be buildable. It is difficult to ascertain how many will be built upon.

## **Environmental Demand**

### **Current Demands**

Information on current environmental water demands is available from two sources:

1) conditions on water rights permits and licenses and associated orders on file with the State Water Resources Control Board, and 2) agreements between the California Department of Fish and Game and other entities. There are no current environmental demands, as reflected in water rights and regulating agreements, for WPA 9c.

### **Future Demands**

The CDFG is currently developing a protocol for determining stream flow needs to protect environmental values (Waithman, CDFG, Yountville, personal communication, February 1998). This protocol is under development and has not been formally accepted or even formally proposed. It is presented here to indicate one estimate of possible future demand. This protocol has not been adopted by CDFG and if it were, other groups or agencies may not accept it. Key provisions may include the following:

- Reservation of 60% of the average annual unimpaired wet-season flow for instream habitat.
- Bypass of all natural flow during dry season (June to September).
- No diversions until stream flows to the ocean (sandbar breached).

WPA 9c is dryer than most of the other WPAs and many streams dry seasonally or during drought periods. None of the streams in this area support steelhead, resident rainbow trout, or other protected fish species. Many of the smaller streams probably do not support fish though western pond turtle, red-legged frog, and other aquatic dependant species may use ponded areas even during low flow periods. Stream flow is highly variable and runoff tends to be rapid after rainfall events. Future environmental water demand may be as low as 0 in drought years (similar to existing conditions). Based on the fact that these streams do not support protected fish species and given their intermittent nature the upper estimate for environmental water demand was relaxed to 60% of unimpaired average annual runoff.

### **Data Deficiencies**

There has been no organized complete effort to quantify instream flow needs in streams of San Luis Obispo County. Studies have been conducted on some streams and restrictions have been placed on certain water rights permit holders to protect instream uses but these have generally focused on the needs of one or a few key species and have not resulted in clear, objective assessments of instream flow needs.

There is not sufficient data to complete a detailed analysis of environmental water demands for all streams in the County. There is no known data for unimpaired runoff for any stream though it is possible estimates could be developed from available rainfall data. The only readily available (electronic) data is from USGS and County maintained streamflow gaging stations. The USGS data presents average runoff estimates as well as minimum and

maximum runoff for each station but this data reflects existing water use and water project operations and in most cases does not reflect unimpaired conditions. Average runoff estimates could also be developed for the SLO gage data and discontinued USGS gages but the information would need to be in an accessible database.

A generic approach to instream flow needs assessment may be useful and data for such an assessment may be available. The County should consider a Tennant type approach using unimpaired runoff estimates generated from rainfall data. Given the wide annual variability in rainfall and runoff, an instream flow needs assessment should account for differences in normal, wet, and dry year flow needs. The County should also have all streamflow data entered in a computer database to facilitate its use.

### **Uncertainties**

In many cases permit or license conditions do not specify a reservation of stream flow for environmental benefit. Rather, they are restrictions on use by individual rights holders. These restrictions are intended to provide benefits to fish and wildlife. However, it is not usually clear how restrictions on an individual water right interact with other water rights and effect streamflows. In addition, it is not always clear how permit conditions are interpreted in terms of an environmental demand. For example, many of the permit conditions call for a “visible surface flow” in a given stream but it is not clear how much water this represents.

Future environmental water demand is subject to great uncertainty due to lack of knowledge of instream flow needed to protect the aquatic resources, lack of information on existing runoff conditions and diversions, and the inherent annual variability in rainfall and runoff. For planning purposes, one could assume that the upper range of future demand will be defined by a percentage of the average annual unimpaired runoff (UAAR) during the wet season and no diversion during the dry season. This task is complicated since many streams are not gaged streams and unimpaired flow must be estimated using hydrologic modeling. This information is not presently available.

### **References**

Stalnaker, C., B.L.Lamb, J. Henriksen, K. Bovee, and J. Bartholow. 1995. The Instream Flow Incremental Methodology: A primer for IFIM. Biological Report 29. U.S.D.I., National Biological Survey, Washington, D.C.

SWRCB, 1997. Staff Report Russian River Watershed. Proposed Actions to be taken by the Division of Water Rights on Pending Water Right Applications within the Russian River Watershed. Division of Water Rights. Sacramento, California

### **Supply**

Water service to the Shandon area is provided by small, isolated water systems that lack interties.

### **Groundwater Supply**

Table 14 lists the ground water basins in WPA 9c. WPA 9c includes the Paso Robles ground water basin and the upstream basins of Pozo and Cholame. Agricultural uses are predominant. The Regional Water Quality Control Board had a study of the Paso Robles ground water basin performed by the Coastal Resources Institute at Cal Poly State University for the purpose of establishing best management practices and salt objectives on which the

basin plan was to be based. This report identifies the water quality issues within particular areas of the Paso Robles basin. Some of these issues include native boron and salinity, geothermal waters, and agricultural and municipal salt loading and locally high nitrate concentrations. Water planning will need to include the impact of future uses and management strategies on water quality as it relates to the basin objectives.

**Table 14**  
**WPA 9c Ground Water Basins**

<b>Basin Name</b>	<b>Basin Area in Square Miles</b>	<b>Basin yield with original descriptive term in acre-feet per year</b>	<b>Production - year in acre-feet</b>
Paso Robles	640 <sup>(16)</sup>	47,000 total annual recharge <sup>(16)</sup>	104,621 - 1986 <sup>(17)</sup>
Pozo	5.6 <sup>(6)</sup>	1,000 safe available storage <sup>(6)</sup>	300 - 1958 <sup>(6)</sup>
Cholame			

6. California Department of Water Resources, 1958, San Luis Obispo County Investigation: State Water Resources Board Bulletin No. 18, vol. I and II.

16. California Department of Water Resources, 1979, Ground Water in the Paso Robles Basin: Southern District Report.

17. San Luis Obispo County, Department of Planning and Building, 1991 Annual Resources Summary Report.

**Data Deficiencies**

The estimates in Table 14 represent the results of published data from numerous sources, some of which are as much as 40 years old. It is also important to note that most of the basins have not been studied in detail, and true perennial yield values are not known. Thus, much of the information does not reflect current conditions, population, water usage, and agricultural trends. It also tends to point out the necessity of developing new data to more accurately describe the hydrologic conditions of the basins. Most of the estimates of ground water extraction are at least 10 years old.

**Uncertainties**

The Paso Robles ground water basin has been broken into three different sub-basins (WPAs 9a, 9b, and 9c) based on geologic structure, hydrology and water use. The level of investigation done by previous studies (DWR, 1979 and DWR 1958) performed for the entire Paso Robles ground water basin does not appear to provide sufficient detail for planning purposes. The entire Paso Robles basin yield of 47,000 AF/yr is shared among the three sub-basins and the percentage of yield each has access to is undetermined.

The “basin yield” values described in the table reflect the results of a variety of methods of determining yield, including annual recharge, safe yield, seasonal replenishment, and net safe annual extractions, and thus may or may not reflect an accurate perennial yield value for the basin.

**Surface Water Supply**

Ground water is the predominant source of water supply in WPA 9c. The community of Shandon holds a 100 AFY entitlement in the State Water Project. There is also a small amount of appropriated flows (38 AF) along the San Juan Creek and Estrella River systems (Water Rights Information Management System printout dated April 23, 1998 from the State Water Resources Control Board for all water rights in SLO County).



## Uncertainties

While the water rights information states the amount of water individuals and agencies are entitled to withdraw, it does not tabulate actual withdrawals. For example, an owner may be entitled to divert 86,000 gallons per day from May through October of each year. This does not mean that the owner typically diverts this each and every day for six months. On the other hand, this same owner may, in a dry year, want to divert his full entitlement over the six month period. However, if there is not enough water in the creek to support his diversion, it may not be physically possible to divert the full amount.

The reader is alerted to this especially when interpreting the estimates of appropriated stream flows.

## DEFICIENCIES

The Shandon WPA is very large, and very sparsely settled. Agricultural uses have changed from dry farm to vineyards and may change to alfalfa in some areas. It also has no supply alternatives identified.

**Table 15**  
**Existing (ac-ft/yr)**

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Grndwater Supply</b>	<b>NonGrndwater Supply</b>	<b>Total Supplies</b>	<b>Balance<sup>a</sup> (Deficiency)</b>
21,080	48,000	138	48,138	27,060

a. Balance (Deficiency) figure has been rounded to the nearest 10's.

**Table 16**  
**Projected (ac-ft/yr)**

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Grndwater Supply</b>	<b>NonGrndwater Supply</b>	<b>Total Supplies</b>	<b>Balance<sup>a</sup> (Deficiency)</b>
22,960- 28,260	48000	138	48,138	25,180-19,880

a. Balance (Deficiency) figure has been rounded to the nearest 10's.

## ALTERNATIVES

No future water supply options were considered for the purposes of this study.