

County ups level of water severity

■ Developers say they'll bear the brunt of mitigation.

BY APRIL CHARLTON
Adobe Press

The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors raised a big red flag Tuesday for all future development on the Nipomo Mesa.

With a unanimous vote, the supervisors declared a Level 3 severity for water on the Nipomo Mesa, a decision they've struggled with since last year.

A Level 3 severity means the supervisors believe demand for water on the Nipomo Mesa is exceeding supply, but it doesn't mean that building will cease in that area.

The change from Level 2, which means a resource's supply will be exceeded by demand in seven years, to Level 3 won't trigger a building moratorium on the Mesa based on the motion to declare the severity level.

Instead, future development will be subject to "appropriate measures" before water meters are issued.

The measures, which county staff is currently developing as possible area planning

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Water: Level 3 highest

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standards, include developers paying fees for supplemental water and using water-wise landscaping and low-flow plumbing. Staff is also looking ways to implement a water reclamation project across the entire Mesa.

The Level 3 severity designation also requires that all future developments requiring General Plan amendments on the Mesa have supplemental water.

Nipomo Community Services District and members of the Nipomo Community Advisory Council all urged the supervisors to declare the Level 3, while others urged them to stay at Level 2.

Jerry Bunin, government affairs director for the Home Builders Association of the Central Coast, cautioned that a Level 3 designation would hurt developers who are helping the county mitigate Nipomo's traffic and water woes.

"No matter what you pull out of your arsenal (to solve water problems), we'll be on

Q What are the three levels of water severity in Nipomo?

A A Level 3 severity means the county believes demand for water on the Nipomo Mesa is exceeding supply right now, but it doesn't mean that building will come to a halt either.

Level 2 means a resource's supply will be exceeded by demand in seven years.

Level 1 means a resource's supply will be exceeded by demand in nine years.

Source: County of San Luis Obispo

the sights," Bunin said, adding the Home Builders Association doesn't believe a Level 3 is justified.

The county uses severity levels as planning tools to help alleviate threats to such important resources as water. Level 3 — the most severe designation — recognizes that a resource's supply is being exceeded by the demand for it.