

**Ending a decade-long legal battle, a judge awarded water rights** Thursday to the cities of Arroyo Grande, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach and the Oceano Community Services District — as well as to the city of Santa Maria, the Nipomo Community Services District and the Golden State Water Co.

The judgment by Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Jack Komar may end a dispute that began in 1997 between Central Coast public water producers and the Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District and a group of landowners.

The lawsuit was filed to determine who has rights to pump water from the Santa Maria groundwater basin. The basin stretches from Santa Maria into southern San Luis Obispo County.

The judgment can be appealed.

The ruling provides water rights to the public agencies and the losing parties have no water rights, said attorney Henry Weinstock, who represented Arroyo Grande, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach and Oceano.

Weinstock said the ruling doesn't limit landowners now pumping water, because adequate supply exists, but it could affect pumping rights during future water shortages.

— Nick Wilson