

**Mesa Community Alliance Presents:  
Water Crisis on the Mesa: Fact or Fiction??**

1. **WHO:** The major Nipomo Mesa water suppliers are Nipomo Community Services District, Woodlands Mutual Water Company, Golden State Water Company and Rural Water Company. Customers of these four companies use 45% of the water pumped from the Nipomo Mesa aquifer.
2. **WHAT:** The Waterline Intertie Project (WIP) will construct a pipeline to connect the City of Santa Maria water system to the Nipomo Community Services District (NCSD) water system to import 3,000 acre feet of water from Santa Maria to the Mesa each year for a period of 30 years. All the Mesa major water suppliers have legally committed to support this project and will pass the costs on to their customers.
3. **COST:** The cost over 30 years will approximate \$400 million. Each supplier will pay a portion. Private wells, agriculture and Conoco Phillips, who use 55% of the water pumped from our aquifer, are excluded from paying any part of this project.
4. **HOW:** NCSD has asked SLO County to establish an assessment district to include all water customers of the four companies listed in #1 above. If homeowners approve, bonds would be sold to pay for the cost of the bond, construction costs and interest.
5. **WHEN:** SLO County will mail ballots to the affected customers. A homeowner's share of the bonded costs will be based on the property size -- .3 acres will be 1 Benefit Unit; .4 to .6 acres will cost 1.6 BU, etc. Returned ballots will be tabulated by BU to determine passage or failure.
6. **RESULTS:** If 50% plus 1 of the Benefit Units approve, the measure will pass. Assessment costs will be added to property tax bills. **Ongoing water costs** will be added to monthly or bimonthly water bills.
7. **HOMEOWNER COSTS:** Assessment district costs will depend on the water supplier. NCSD customers will pay yearly costs of 66.7% or \$3.1 million, Woodlands will pay 16.7% or \$598,000, Golden State and Rural will pay 8.3% each or \$295,000. Water costs at \$1,500 per acre foot may double current costs and will likely increase 5% per year.
8. **SANTA MARIA WATER BASIN FACTS:** The basin begins below City of Santa Maria and extends through Pismo Beach. Water flows from south to north and toward the ocean near Oceano and Grover Beach. Santa Maria receives supplemental water from the Twitchell reservoir and State Water Project water. The cities of Arroyo Grande, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach and Oceano receive supplemental water from Lopez Reservoir and some also receive State Water Project water. Nipomo Mesa does not receive supplemental water from other sources.
9. **WATER RIGHTS LITIGATION:** Begun in 1997, major litigation involved hundreds of parties including all Mesa suppliers. After 6+ years of testimony from a variety of water experts, the **Santa Clara Superior Court determined that the Santa Maria Basin was not in overdraft and historically had never been in overdraft.**

**PLEASE SIGN OUR PETITION BEFORE YOU LEAVE**

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In 2005 the Court approved the **Stipulation agreement that divided the aquifer into three management areas: Santa Maria, Nipomo Mesa and Northern Cities** (Arroyo Grande, Oceano, Grover Beach and Pismo Beach.) Each area is required to manage its portion of the aquifer and submit an annual report to the Court on its condition. Reports have been submitted since 2008 and are available online at <http://www.nipomowaterfacts.com>.

The Stipulation established the Nipomo Mesa Management Area and a technical group to manage our aquifer. The technical group, with representatives from all the water suppliers and Conoco Phillips, meets monthly. The 2009 report to the Court includes the chart below that shows that the aquifer mirrors the rainfall over a 35-year period. The upper line shows the rainfall in inches above and below average on the right. The lower line is the Key Wells Index Average Groundwater Elevation in feet above sea level on the left. Although water usage has steadily increased from ~4,000 acre feet/ year in 1975 to 12,000 acre feet/year in 2009, the increased usage does not appear to affect the key wells index readings.



**None of the reports to the Court since 2008 has confirmed that the aquifer is in overdraft or that seawater intrusion is imminent.**

**10. WIP NEGATIVES:** The Waterline Intertie Project will NOT guarantee a good reliable source of supplemental water in times of drought. Extended drought will also affect Santa Maria and State Water Project water supply. Moving water that will flow north anyway may deplete the Mesa's normal flow, especially in times of drought. We have time to explore better options: rainfall doubled the average this past winter and will keep our aquifer strong for many years.

**11. PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES:** Use our Nipomo Mesa Management Area technical group expertise to evaluate the technical merits of proposed water projects on the Mesa and

- Develop plans that will add new water to the basin (such as desalination)
- Develop more retention basins to save more rainfall
- Develop more recycled water projects
- Expand water conservation efforts
- Research ways for agriculture users to reduce water use

**Want more?** email: [mesacommunityalliance@gmail.com](mailto:mesacommunityalliance@gmail.com) Website: <http://www.nipomowaterfacts.com>.

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