
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the scope, goals and objectives of the San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) Master Water Plan (MWP). With the recurrence of drought, degradation of groundwater basins and the limited availability of surface water supplies, it is important for all entities of San Luis Obispo County (“County” for government; “county” for geographic domain) to effectively manage available water resources. Water resources should be managed to simultaneously protect the public health and safety, maintain ecosystems, avoid seawater intrusion, and support agriculture into the future. In order to effectively manage water resources, it is important to understand the complete picture of water resources management in the county and how the practices (i.e. water use, policy adoption, planning, and project implementation) of all entities within the county influence each other.

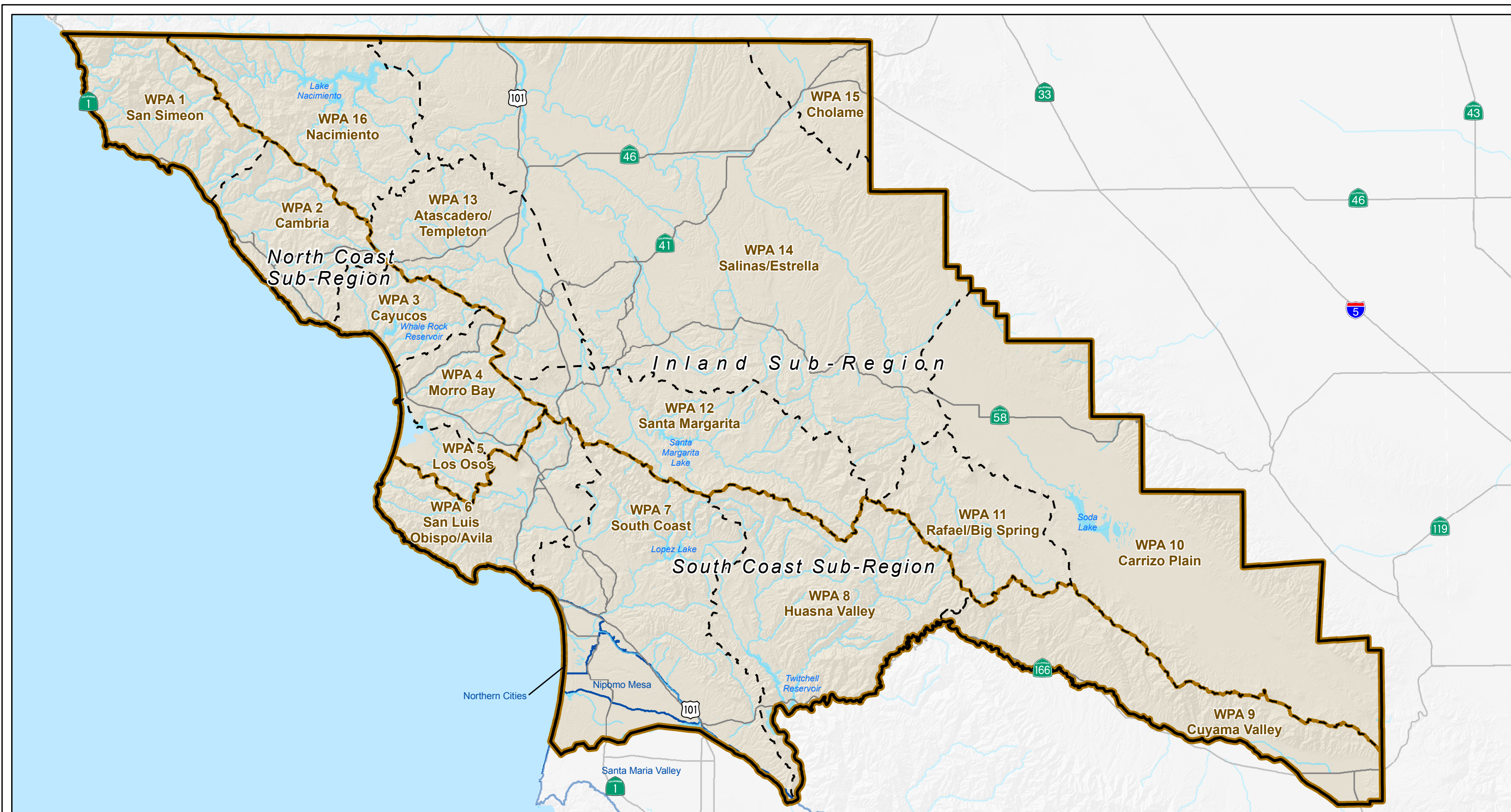
The District approached the MWP geographically by dividing the county into three (3) sub-regions (North Coast, South Coast, and Inland), and then further subdividing into water planning areas (WPAs) within each sub-region (Figure 1.1). This sub-regionalization facilitated water resources analysis by recognizing jurisdictions that overlie groundwater basins and interconnected watersheds in order to assess their relationship. The relationship between the three sub-regions that are connected by the District’s/County’s jurisdiction as well as the regional water projects such as the Nacimiento Water Project (NWP), Salinas Reservoir system, Whale Rock Reservoir system, Lopez Water System and State Water Coast Branch, were evaluated for their potential to be optimized to better meet the county’s water needs.

It is recommended that future MWPs move away from the three sub-region and WPA approach, and focus more on individual watersheds and groundwater basins. In other words, future MWPs should become more detailed as the current WPAs are broken down further into smaller subsets that better fit the geographic and political boundaries that define local water planning efforts.

1.1 SCOPE OF MASTER WATER PLAN

The MWP is a comprehensive plan that evaluated multiple water management strategies, including optimization of existing water supplies to meet water resource needs countywide. In general, the scope of work for this project included:

- Documentation of existing water resource jurisdictions and their current and future activities/water planning efforts.
- Analysis and documentation of current and future water supply and demand on a county-wide basis.



Legend

- Highways
- Major Rivers/Streams
- Management Area
- Sub-Region
- Water Planning Area
- Water Planning Area Boundary
- Waterbodies

Text:

Sub-Region

Water Planning Area

Management Area

Hydrography

Figure 1.1
San Luis Obispo County
Sub-Regions and Water Planning Areas
 Master Water Plan
 San Luis Obispo County Flood Control
 and Water Conservation District

- Identification and analysis of potential water management strategies to address possible water supply shortfalls.
- Documentation of the role of the Master Water Plan in supporting other water resource planning efforts.

1.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the MWP is to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of county-wide water resources and management efforts of these resources under current conditions and at general plan build-out for the different agencies within the county, and to identify and evaluate water management strategies for addressing forecast supply deficiencies, similar to Urban Water Management Plans and General Plan Water Elements.

Since many different entities have developed water resource analysis and land use planning documents for individual communities and areas in the county, the MWP combined those efforts with an analysis of the areas not covered by local plans to complete an integrated, county-wide MWP. This effort identified, consolidated, and integrated county-wide water supply and demand information to understand how water resources are influenced by urban, rural and agricultural users and to identify additional opportunities for water resource management.

Other specific goals and objectives of the MWP are discussed below.

1.2.1 Ensure Stakeholder Input/Participation

The approach for the preparation of this MWP included stakeholder input and participation. Participation was accomplished through a series of Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) meetings, presentation of information to different agencies and County departments, and meetings with WRAC sub-committees and working groups. County staff and the project team met with the WRAC in a workshop setting at significant project milestones, as summarized in Table 1.1:

In addition to the WRAC meetings, the project team met with the County's Planning Department to discuss on-going studies for the unincorporated areas of the County and their impact on future development and water demands. The team also gathered data from and met individually (as needed) with some of the water agencies in the County to discuss findings and recommendations of the study.

1.2.2 Create a Framework for Maintaining the Master Water Plan

The recommendation for updating and maintaining the MWP is discussed further in Chapter 5. The goal of those recommendations is to improve the process and efficiency for revising future MWPs. This will be facilitated by the County retaining the GIS shapefiles collected for the project and continually updating them as more information becomes

available. Other recommendations for creating a framework for maintaining the MWP include:

- Maintain a current inventory of water resource data and reports. Information collected to prepare this MWP is presented throughout the documents included in Appendices A through D.

| Table 1.1 WRAC Workshops | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Workshop No. | Date | Completed Tasks |
| 1 | June 3, 2009 | WRAC Kick Off Meeting Presented goals and objectives of MWP Presented schedule and approach of study Clarify WRAC involvement |
| 2 | October 7, 2009 | Presented available data Geographic organization of the County - Sub Regions and Water Planning Areas Summarized demand analysis approach - Urban, rural, agricultural, and environmental Summarized groundwater resources and water supply by WPA |
| 3 | January 6, 2010 | Summarized preliminary water demand and supply analysis Presented criteria for asserting a supply shortfall and for evaluating supply strategies |
| 4 | April 7, 2010 | Rated criteria for prioritizing water supply strategies Presented preliminary water management strategies Presented concepts for interagency agreements and cooperative programs to optimize existing water supplies |
| 5 | September 1, 2010 | Presented demand and supply by WPA, urban agency, rural, agriculture and environmental user Presented revised water management strategies to resolve potential supply shortfalls |
| Working Group Meeting | November 10, 2010 | Explored institutional arrangements and regional water management strategies |
| Working Group Meeting | December 21, 2010 | Discussed preferred regional water management strategy options to optimize existing resources |
| 6 | March 21, 2011 | Presented draft Master Water Plan - Goals and objectives - General recommendations Presented general agricultural and rural water management strategies Presented findings and recommendations for urban users |

- Improve the data sharing protocol between local agencies and the County for consistency and overlap/redundancy reduction.
- Specify how information from other water resources planning documents are used in the MWP and how information developed in the MWP can be utilized in other water resources planning documents.
- Establish a schedule for updating the MWP that is consistent with other water resources planning requirements.
- Specify the scope of work involved with updating the MWP.
- Estimate a budget for updating the MWP.

1.2.3 Accurately Present Current and Future Supply/Demand

Chapter 4 presents a summary of the county-wide water supply and demand. A reasonable level of accuracy was achieved because this project:

- Utilized recent water resource information, where available.
- Utilized land-use and demographic information.
- Utilized as much of the existing data as local resource agencies provided.
- Accounted for potential reductions in supply, reliability issues, future land use and/or conservation policies in the future water supply and demand analysis.

1.2.4 Ensure Support for Agricultural Demand Analysis

Chapter 4 summarizes the approach used to quantify the agricultural demands. The approach was presented to the WRAC and to the County's Agricultural Commissioner.

1.2.5 Ensure Support for Environmental Water Demand Characterization

Chapter 4 summarizes the approach used to quantify the environmental demands. The approach was presented to the WRAC.

1.2.6 Respect Autonomy of Individual Jurisdictions while Recognizing Differences/Conflicts

For urban users, this project relied primarily on published water master plans and water supply studies to be consistent with local purveyor water demand projections and planned water supply projects. Chapter 4 summarizes the documents used from the water purveyors within the county. In addition, each purveyor was provided multiple opportunities to review the draft memoranda and reports to ensure consistency between the MWP and their water planning documents.

1.2.7 Present Analysis of Options, Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 4 presents the water demand analysis for urban, rural, agricultural and environmental users in the county. It also presents the conclusions and recommendations for addressing potential water supply shortfalls, with an emphasis on promoting:

- Optimization of conservation measures.
- Optimization of unsubscribed State Water allocation.
- Optimization of unsubscribed Nacimiento Water Project allocation.
- Opportunities for optimizing other local surface water supplies.
- Opportunities for increasing the efficiency of existing infrastructure.
- Opportunities for water re-use.
- Opportunities for emergency/drought protection measures such as inter-ties and groundwater banking.

1.2.8 Ensure Compatibility with Other Documents

Chapter 5 summarizes how the MWP is related to, and coordinated with the development of several other County documents, including the:

- County's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP).
- Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE).
- Agricultural Element.
- Land Use Element.
- Resource Management System.

The goals, objectives and policies in the first three documents guided the analysis of water management strategies, and the data contained within and collected by the last two documents were valuable in conducting the analysis.

1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE MASTER WATER PLAN

This document is not intended to establish water rights or to set the maximum water supply sources available to users within the County. It is primarily a "high-level" summary of available information and estimates of the water supply versus demand analysis. Comments about cities and other water suppliers are not to be interpreted as overruling the rights and powers of these agencies. Other technical limitations to this Master Water Plan are presented below.

1.3.1 Technical Challenges with Demand Assessment

There were a number of technical challenges with analyzing and developing the urban, rural, agricultural and environmental demands for the MWP. Appendix D contains the technical memorandum that describes the water demand methodology used for this project and the assumptions made to facilitate the calculation of demands for the four categories. A description of the technical limitations in the approach for computing the urban, rural and agricultural demands follows, and the challenges with computing the environmental demands are discussed later in this section.

1.3.1.1 Urban Water Demand

The existing demands for urban users were based on available Water Master Plans, Urban Water Management Plans, and the County's Resource Management System. Although the demands are referred to as "existing," by the time the MWP is finalized, the data could be a few years old. This should not present a substantial problem since water demands do not fluctuate significantly from year to year. However, this minor issue highlights the difficulty in ensuring that the data presented in this report is current and that the demands are not absolute values, but approximations. Water providers should be encouraged to prepare urban water management plans, even if they are not required by California legislation, in order to maintain current demand projections and forecasts.

1.3.1.2 Rural Water Demand

The primary technical challenge with calculating rural water demands was having accurate water duty factors for rural water demands since most individual properties are not metered. Due to different climates and types of water usage, the water duty factors can vary widely between region and time of year. Coastal rural areas will generally require less water than inland rural areas due to greater evapotranspiration in the inland areas and more precipitation in the coastal areas.

1.3.1.3 Agricultural Water Demand

The Agriculture/Crop ArcGIS® layer for the County from August 2008 was used to determine existing agricultural acreage for each crop group. This layer is updated yearly with information from the pesticide use permits growers obtain through the San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture. These permits are not entirely accurate as they occasionally include permanent crops which are planned and include many annual crops which may or may not be planted based upon various factors. The number of crop rotations varies and is not identified in the Agriculture/Crop ArcGIS® layer. The majority of irrigated vegetables are rotated numerous times throughout the year. Coastal areas with available water may have multiple crops planted in a particular year. The irrigation practices of each operation are also not accounted for. Given the current land use, the demand projection for Water Planning Area 1 in particular could be refined significantly by taking ranching operations water use and conservation easement provisions into account. Ranching operations do not

use pesticides and therefore are not included in the County's Agriculture/Crop ArcGIS® layer were not included in the demand calculation.

The agricultural crop ArcGIS® layer includes approximately 200 classifications of commodities. This included approximately 86,000 acres of rangeland and 42,000 acres of uncultivated agriculture. For purposes of this analysis, the irrigated commodities were categorized into seven groups. Although the groups are based on commodities that may have similar water requirements, the actual water usage will vary based on a number of variables including; individual commodities, soil type, and number of rotations on individual parcels.

1.3.1.4 Definition of "Build-Out" Demand

The forecast demands for urban users were based on available reports but represent the "build-out" demand of a service area, sphere of influence, or urban reserve line of an incorporated or unincorporated city in the county. There are two concerns with referring to the demands as build-out. The first is that the growth boundaries are not static. When general plans are updated, the growth boundaries typically change and expand. Therefore, the values presented in this report could increase in future MWP updates. The second concern is the year in which build-out is reached. Each community in the County grows at different rates and the year in which the forecast demand is reached is neither consistent nor fixed for each community. Therefore, the limitation with the build-out demand, which also applies to rural and agricultural demands, is the variability in future forecasts and the difficulty in estimating these values with available information.

1.3.1.5 Conservation and Irrigation Efficiencies

Since forecast demands are not absolute or fixed values, determining a range of possible demands was selected as the preferred approach. The approach to defining the low end of the demand range required some assumptions regarding conservation, development potential, and agricultural irrigation efficiencies and expansion. There are limitations to this approach because the assumptions made could vary from the actual consumption and create a potential shortfall in supply. The low forecast demand range for urban users assumed a certain amount of conservation for most communities. The amount assumed by each community depended on the anticipated level of conservation that could be achieved. The low demand range for rural users represents a percent of the development potential and recognizes that 100 percent of the property will not be developed. For agricultural demand, the approach assumed higher irrigation efficiencies for future demands than in existing demand calculations.

1.3.2 Use of Available Technical Documents

This MWP relied on and attempted to be consistent with available documents of various agencies. Terminology used in these available documents was often quoted verbatim for the MWP. Therefore, some suggested changes (i.e. comments received) to terms used in

this MWP were not adopted in order to remain consistent with respective reference documents. While this approach may cause some confusion it was believed consistency with the base document was the overriding consideration. The desired changes should be made first in the reference documents, before being incorporated into the MWP.

1.3.3 Groundwater Basin Yield Estimates

Published hydrogeologic information for many groundwater basins in the County are compiled from older reports and may not be representative of current conditions. For some groundwater basins, the safe yield estimate was based on the documented historical production that has not resulted in water supply problems. Also, the relationship between stream underflow, surface flow, and perennial yield is not adequately understood, especially for the coastal groundwater basins. In order to gain more current or detailed information for these basins, new and additional studies would be necessary. Information currently compiled by County departments (such as well logs for private wells or water quality for shared well systems) could be useful to these studies. Additional information may also be available from the DWR and private sources.

1.3.4 Use of Management Area Reports

Annual reports for the Nipomo Mesa Management Area, Northern Cities Management Area and the Santa Maria Valley Management Area are prepared in accordance with the Stipulation and Judgment for the Santa Maria Groundwater Litigation (Lead Case No. 1-97-CV-770214). The annual reports provide an assessment of hydrologic conditions for the three management areas based on an analysis of the data accruing each calendar year. Each annual report is submitted to the court annually in accordance with the Stipulation in the year following that, which is assessed in the report.

The information contained in these annual reports could change based on data collected from the previous year, and the changes may not be reflected in this MWP. Readers should acknowledge that the figures presented in this MWP may not be 100 percent current, but we attempted to provide the most current available information at the time the MWP was being written.

1.3.5 Technical Challenges with Environmental Assessment

The environmental demand estimates presented in this master water plan are not absolute values. Planning-level assessments such as this one do not take the complexity of natural systems into consideration and this point should be acknowledged when using the findings in this plan. The results provide a reasonable and scientifically supported estimate of environmental water demand for the purposes of evaluating water balances on an annual water planning area basis. In watersheds with creeks that have transient high flows during the winter season, the timing of the flows can be as important to biological resources as the amount of flow. Unfortunately, evaluating to this level of detail was beyond the scope of this

study, and will be left to future work. The environmental demand assessment presented in this report should be viewed as a starting point that will be refined over time.

Site- and project-specific in-stream flow requirements determined on a sub-watershed or creek basis would improve future master water plans. A more detailed analysis would moderate the need to extrapolate data from one unimpaired stream and apply it to a neighboring watershed. This approach should make the analysis more focused and increase the certainty in the results. The first steps in this effort are establishing appropriate data collection sites, identifying opportunities for coordination with appropriate entities on the data collection effort and prioritizing locations to study first.

The specific steps that could be taken by the District include (in no particular order or priority):

- Increase the number and distribution of stream flow gauges to capture unimpaired runoff flow measurements and the varying hydrologic conditions throughout the County.
- Determine other data that would be necessary to complete a stream species specific analysis.
- Select a water planning area, watershed or creek to conduct a more focused environmental water demand assessment and develop a workplan for implementing the analysis that could be applied county-wide.
- Determine role of the District, County, resource agencies, local agencies, local stakeholders (project proponents), and riparian rights holders in implementing these steps.

1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

ArcGIS: ArcGIS is a geographic information system (GIS) software product used for working with maps and geographic information. It is used for: creating and using maps; compiling geographic data; analyzing mapped information; and managing geographic information in a database.

CCWA: The Central Coast Water Authority was formed in 1991 through a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement among nine public agencies in Santa Barbara County and has Water Supply Agreements with five other entities. CCWA was specifically formed for the purpose of designing, building and operating the facilities needed to deliver water from the State Water Project (SWP) to the various entities with contracts to receive that water in Santa Barbara County.

- CEQA:** The California Environmental Quality Act is a statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.
- CSA:** In unincorporated areas, residents of urban communities may want more services than those residing in rural areas. The County Service Area Law (Government Code §25210.1 *et seq.*) was created to provide a means for expanding service levels in areas where residents are willing to pay for the extra service. The law allows residents or county supervisors to initiate the formation of a County Service Area (or CSA). A CSA is authorized to provide a wide variety of services, including fire protection, water and garbage collection. A CSA may span all unincorporated areas of a county or only selected portions.
- CSD:** Community Services Districts (CSDs) are independent governmental agencies that exist separately from, and with substantial administrative and fiscal independence from, general purpose local governments. Special district governments provide specific services such as hospitals, sewerage, water and fire protection. CSDs are also subject to specific legislative and regulatory controls.
- DWR:** The mission of the California State Department of Water Resources (DWR) is to manage the water resources of California in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the State's people, and to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environments. DWR operates and maintains the California State Water Project (SWP). Other programs work to preserve the natural environment and wildlife, monitor dam safety, manage floodwaters, conserve water use, and provide technical assistance and funding for projects for local water needs.
- ISJ:** Interlocutory Stipulated Judgment (ISJ) established a formal process for the County and three water purveyors in Los Osos to engage in cooperative water resources management efforts to solve groundwater overdraft and current sea water intrusion.
- MOA or MOU:** A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), also known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), is a formal document used to outline an agreement made between two or more separate entities, groups or individuals. An MOA usually precedes a more detailed contract or agreement between the parties, after a process of negotiations and due diligence. This MOA may be used to cooperatively work together on an agreed-upon purpose or meet an agreed objective and outline the discussed terms of a new relationship.

- MWP:** The Master Water Plan (this document) will serve to help policy makers, planners, and the public understand the long-range availability of water resources throughout the County of San Luis Obispo.
- MWC:** Mutual Water Companies (MWCs) are most commonly formed as general corporations or as nonprofit mutual benefit corporations. Mutual water companies may deliver water to their shareholders for agricultural irrigation or domestic uses.
- NCMA:** The Northern Cities Management Area (NCMA) includes the northernmost portion of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin. The cities of Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, and Pismo Beach, the Oceano Community Services District, the County and local landowners that signed the court-approved stipulation during the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin litigation actively and cooperatively manage surface and groundwater resources in the NCMA.
- NMMA:** The Nipomo Mesa Management Area (NMMA) lies to the south of the NCMA and includes ConocoPhillips, Golden State Water Company, Nipomo Community Services District, Woodlands Mutual Water Company, Rural Water Company, and other NMMA overlying landowners that signed the court-approved stipulation during the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin litigation. The NMMA Technical Group is charged with developing the technical bases for sustainable management of the surface and groundwater supplies available in this management area.
- RWQCB or Regional Board:** The Regional Water Quality Control Board's (RWQCB or Regional Board) mission is to develop and enforce water quality objectives and implementation plans that will best protect the State's waters, recognizing local differences in climate, topography, geology and hydrology.
- TMA or SMVMA:** Twitchell Management Authority (TWA)(aka the Santa Maria Valley Management Area) is the largest of the three management areas that overlie the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin. This management area lies over the main Santa Maria Valley. The SMVMA encompasses the contiguous area of the Santa Maria Valley, Sisquoc plain, and Orcutt upland, and is primarily comprised of agricultural land and areas of native vegetation, as well as the urban areas of Santa Maria, Guadalupe, Orcutt, Sisquoc, and several small developments.
- UWMP:** Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs) are prepared by California's urban water suppliers to support their long-term resource planning and ensure adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future water demands. Every urban water supplier that either provides over 3,000 acre-feet of water annually or serves 3,000 or more connections is required

to assess the reliability of its water sources over a 20-year planning horizon considering normal, dry, and multiple dry years. This assessment is included in its UWMP, which are prepared every 5 years and submitted to the Department of Water Resources.

WPA: Water Planning Area(s) (WPA or WPAs) represent geographic organization of the County. Water demand, water supply, and supply sources are organized by WPA. In general, the WPA boundaries coincide with watershed or groundwater basin boundaries, and are intended primarily to recognize important hydrogeologic units or water management areas throughout the County.

For additional information on terms found in the MWP, please refer to the reference documents listed throughout the MWP. Various publications (such as the Layperson's Guide to Water Rights Law published by the Water Education Foundation) are also available online for information regarding water rights and water law in California.