



**WEEKLY UPDATE
MARCH 1 - 7, 2020**

**MAKE SURE YOU VOTE BY MARCH 3RD – THE
SUPERVISORS RACES ARE FOR KEEPS/THEY
DON'T GO TO NOVEMBER**



**DON'T LEAVE YOUR VOTE ON THE
TABLE OR THE KITCHEN COUNTER**

**REMEMBER THEY ARE ELECTED BY DISTRICT, BUT
ONCE ELECTED, GOVERN THE ENTIRE COUNTY
PLUS THE APCD, SLOCOG, LAFCO, & IWMA**

**VOTE NO ON THE TRICK “PROPOSITION 13”
DEBT & TAX MEASURE**

11th ANNUAL



San Luis Obispo County



DINNER & FUNDRAISER

Steve Hayward
UC Berkeley's Conservative Senior Resident Scholar
 Why is the World So Crazy,
 Can it Be Made Sane Again?

Thursday, March 26
 Alex Madonna Expo Center

5:15 pm Social Hour, Open Bar
 6:15 pm Filet Mignon Dinner including Wine
 \$120 per person | \$1,200 per Table (Reserved Seating for 10)

For tickets
 Reservations and payment can be made at:
<http://www.colabslo.org/support.asp>

Or mail your check to:
 COLAB SLO: PO Box 13601, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Cocktail Attire Optional
 For more information
 (805) 548-0340 | colabslo@gmail.com



NATIONAL COLUMNIST, REAGAN AUTHOR, & UC BERKELEY CONSERVATIVE SENIOR SCHOLAR WILL INSPIRE OUR RESOLVE
GREAT FOOD, WINE, AND AUCTION ITEMS
STAND UNITED CELEBRATING LIBERTY AND PROSPERITY
SUPPORT COLAB OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
GET TICKETS AND TABLES AT: <http://www.colabslo.org/events.asp>
HEAR STEVE HAYWARD'S PHENOMENAL FIRST HAND ACCOUNT
WHY IS THE WORLD SO CRAZY? CAN IT BE MADE SANE AGAIN?

Steven F. Hayward is currently senior resident scholar at UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, and a visiting lecturer at Berkeley Law. He was previously the Ronald Reagan Distinguished Visiting Professor at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Public Policy, and was the inaugural visiting scholar in conservative thought and policy at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2013-14. From 2002 to 2012 he was the F.K Weyerhaeuser Fellow in Law and Economics at the

American Enterprise Institute in Washington DC, and has been senior fellow at the Pacific Research Institute in San Francisco since 1991.

He writes frequently for the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *National Review*, the *Washington Examiner*, the *Claremont Review of Books*, and other publications. The author of six books including a two-volume chronicle of Reagan and his times entitled *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980*, and *The Age of Reagan: The Conservative Counter-Revolution, 1980-1989*, and the *Almanac of Environmental Trends*. His most recent book is *Patriotism is Not Enough: Harry Jaffa, Walter Berns, and the Arguments That Redefined American Conservatism*.



THIS WEEK

NO BOS MEETING ELECTION DAY

INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY CANCELLED

BUT STAFF WORKING AWAY ON EXPANDED PLASTIC BAG BAN

UPDATE AND INTERIM GUIDANCE ON OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

COUNTIES WILL BE THE FRONTLINE IF IT BECOMES A TRUE PANDEMIC

REGIONAL WATER BOARD AG ORDER EIR SEE PAGE 34 FOR THE DRAFT ORDER & HOW TO COMMENT

LAST WEEK

**STRATEGIC HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN
INCLUDES THE CITIES, COUNTY, SLOCOG, HOMEBUILDERS & OTHERS
FAR REACHING AND NEEDED**

**FY 2019-20 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
\$1.4 BILLION IN SHORT AND LONG TERM DEBT
PENSIONS, WATER, & SEWER SYSTEMS TOP THE LIST**

**LARGE MENTAL HEALTH GRANT
DEALS WITH PROBLEMS IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS – SUICIDES, DROPOUTS,
EXPULSIONS, INCARCERATIONS, ETC. – WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?**

\$608 MILLION 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**PLANNING COMMISSION TO EXPAND PASO WATER
MORATORIUM – 103,000 ACRES OF RANGELAND
TO BE ANNEXED TO SGMA AREA**

SLO COLAB IN DEPTH

SEE PAGE 24

THE PERVERSE PANIC OVER PLASTIC

JOHN TIERNEY

EMPTY WORDS ON HOMELESSNESS

BY STEPHEN EIDE

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 (Not Scheduled)

The next regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting is set for March 10, 2020.

SLO Integrated Waste Management Authority Meeting of Wednesday, March 11, 2020 (Canceled)

For whatever reason the meeting was canceled, but the staff is working away on its latest assignment. During its February meeting the Authority's Executive Committee proposed an expansion of the Plastic Bag Ban beyond the carryout bags. The new ban would include grocery store individual product bags such as produce, meat, and fish bags. The plastic garment bags provided by dry cleaners would also be banned.

The staff was directed to prepare an ordinance and return. Supervisors Hill and Gibson supported the policy, while Supervisors Arnold, Compton, and Peschong were opposed. Six of the 7 city officials on the IWMA Board also supported the policy.

Please see the articles in the COLAB In Depth section on page 24 below for a comprehensive and penetrating critique of these bans.



Banned

The bags would be banned. You will have to buy reusable cotton bags, \$20 for a 4 Pac, from Amazon. Then you will have to wash them to keep them sanitary. The fish/meat bag is \$29.99



Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

It is not known yet if COVID-19 will become a serious and life threatening pandemic like the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic (it actually started at Ft. Leavenworth in Kansas and spread to the rest of the world) or the Polio epidemic of the late 1940's and early 1950's. The Chinese seem to be treating it as a species of Flu that will burn itself out. So far the morbidity rate is estimated at about 3.5 %. Flu morbidity rate is hard to pin down in the US. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that influenza has resulted in between 9 million and 45 million illnesses, between 140,000-810,000 hospitalizations and between 12,000-61,000 deaths annually since 2010. In California about 14.5 people per 100,000 die of Pneumonia and Flu combined in a typical year.

Counties nationally and locally will serve as the frontline management agencies if COVID-19 does emerge as a large scale pandemic. The County Health Department has been posting information on the homepage of the County's website. Most counties prepared a pandemic annex to their emergency response plans as a result of Bio-terrorism threats of 2002, West Nile Virus 2005, Avian Flu pandemic threat of 2006, and Swine Flu threat of 2009. The plans build off the counties' emergency plans for conflagrations, earthquakes, floods, civil unrest, nuclear attacks or releases, and so forth.

County Operations

The plans detail how to prevent or reduce spread (closing schools, shopping areas, theaters, and banks, and limiting travel), managing large groups of sick and dying people, providing food and water if normal systems break down, maintaining civil order, maintaining governmental operations, and otherwise preserving life and property. What if a significant number of County emergency personnel such as firefighters, paramedics, deputy sheriffs, nurses, public safety dispatchers, doctors, and utility workers (water and sewer plants) are impacted? The plans also contain succession plans to backfill if significant elected officials are too sick to function or die. Plans also provide for mobilizing of volunteer medical personnel.

A critical power supply issue would occur if a significant number of PG&E workers are infected and unable to report to work.

Smaller jurisdictions such as central coast cities and counties will be on their own, as national and state resources, such as the military, will be tied up in the metropolitan areas to care for the sick and maintain public order.

Financial and Long Term Impacts

The County will also need to assess the collateral damage impacts. For example, if travel were to be banned nationally and statewide, what would be the impacts on revenues such as the hotel tax and sales tax? If the stock market continues to plunge, what are the near and long term impacts on the County's 7% return assumption for its pension system?

US Centers For Disease Control Status Report

As of this writing the latest report states in part:

Update and Interim Guidance on Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



*Distributed via the CDC Health Alert Network
February 28, 2020, 15:05 ET (3:05 PM ET)
CDCHAN-00428*

Summary

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to closely monitor and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel

coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

This CDC Health Alert Network (HAN) Update provides updated guidance on evaluating and testing persons under investigation (PUIs) for COVID-19. It supersedes guidance provided in CDC's HAN 427 distributed on February 1, 2020.

The outbreak that began in Wuhan, Hubei Province, has now spread throughout China and to 46 other countries and territories, including the United States. As of February 27, 2020, there were 78,497 reported cases in China and 3,797 cases in locations outside China. In addition to sustained transmission in China, there is evidence of community spread in several additional countries. CDC has updated travel guidance to reflect this information (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>).

To date, there has been limited spread of COVID-19 in the United States. As of February 26, 2020, there were a total of 61 cases within the United States, 46 of these were among repatriated persons from high-risk settings. The other 15 cases were diagnosed in the United States; 12 were persons with a history of recent travel in China and 2 were persons in close household contact with a COVID-19 patient (i.e. person-to-person spread). One patient with COVID-19 who had no travel history or links to other known cases was reported on February 26, 2020, in California. The California Department of Public Health, local health departments, clinicians, and CDC are working together to investigate this case and are identifying contacts with whom this individual interacted.

CDC, state and local health departments, other federal agencies, and other partners have been implementing measures to slow and contain transmission of COVID-19 in the United States. These

measures include assessing, monitoring, and caring for travelers arriving from areas with substantial COVID-19 transmission and identifying cases and contacts of cases in the United States.

Recognizing persons at risk for COVID-19 is a critical component of identifying cases and preventing further transmission. With expanding spread of COVID-19, additional areas of geographic risk are being identified and PUI criteria are being updated to reflect this spread. To prepare for possible additional person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in the United States, CDC continues to recommend that clinicians and state and local health departments consider COVID-19 in patients with severe respiratory illness even in the absence of travel history to affected areas or known exposure to another case.

Criteria to Guide Evaluation and Testing of Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19

Local or state health departments, in consultation with clinicians, should determine whether a patient is a PUI for COVID-19. The CDC clinical criteria for COVID-19 PUIs have been developed based on available information about this novel virus, as well as what is known about Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (<https://www.cdc.gov/sars/clinical/guidance.html>) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/interim-guidance.html#evaluation>). These criteria are subject to change as additional information becomes available.

Clinical Features		Epidemiologic Risk
Fever ¹ or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath)	AND	Any person, including healthcare personnel ² , who has had close contact ³ with a laboratory-confirmed ⁴ COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever ¹ and signs/symptoms of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough or shortness of breath) requiring hospitalization	AND	A history of travel from affected geographic areas ⁵ , within 14 days of symptom onset
Fever ¹ with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS (acute respiratory distress syndrome) requiring hospitalization and without an alternative explanatory diagnosis (e.g., influenza). ⁶	AND	No identified source of exposure

These criteria are intended to serve as guidance for evaluation. In consultation with public health departments, patients should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine the need for testing. Testing may be considered for deceased persons who would otherwise meet the PUI criteria.

¹Fever may be subjective or confirmed.

²For healthcare personnel, testing may be considered if there has been exposure to a person with suspected COVID-19 without laboratory confirmation. Because of their often extensive and close contact with vulnerable patients in healthcare settings, even mild signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat) of COVID-19 should be evaluated among potentially exposed healthcare personnel. Additional information is available in CDC’s Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>).

³Close contact is defined as—

- a) being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case

– or –

- b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)
- If such contact occurs while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gowns, gloves, NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator, eye protection), criteria for PUI consideration are met.

Additional information is available in CDC’s updated Interim Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed COVID-19 or Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>).

Data to inform the definition of close contact are limited. Considerations when assessing close contact include the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk) and the clinical symptoms of the person with COVID-19 (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk, as does exposure to a severely ill patient). Special consideration should be given to healthcare personnel exposed in healthcare settings, as described in CDC’s Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>).

⁴Documentation of laboratory-confirmation of COVID-19 may not be possible for travelers or persons caring for COVID-19 patients in other countries.

⁵Affected areas are defined as geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified. Relevant affected areas will be defined as a country with at least a CDC Level 2 Travel Health Notice. Current information is available in CDC’s COVID-19 Travel Health Notices (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers>).

⁶Category includes single or clusters of patients with severe acute lower respiratory illness (e.g., pneumonia, ARDS (acute respiratory distress syndrome) of unknown etiology in which COVID-19 is being considered.

Recommendations for Reporting, Testing, and Specimen Collection

Clinicians should immediately implement recommended infection prevention and control practices (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>) if a patient is suspected of having COVID-19. They should also notify infection control personnel at their healthcare facility and their state or local health department if a patient is classified as a PUI for COVID-19. State health departments that have identified a PUI or a laboratory-confirmed case should complete a PUI and Case Report form through the processes identified on CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/reporting-pui.html>). State and local health departments can contact CDC's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 770-488-7100 for assistance with obtaining, storing, and shipping appropriate specimens to CDC for testing, including after hours or on weekends or holidays. Currently, diagnostic testing for COVID-19 is being performed at state public health laboratories and CDC. Testing for other respiratory pathogens should not delay specimen testing for COVID-19.

For initial diagnostic testing for SARS-CoV-2, CDC recommends collecting and testing upper respiratory tract specimens (nasopharyngeal AND oropharyngeal swabs). CDC also recommends testing lower respiratory tract specimens, if available. For patients who develop a productive cough, sputum should be collected and tested for SARS-CoV-2. The induction of sputum is not recommended. For patients for whom it is clinically indicated (e.g., those receiving invasive mechanical ventilation), a lower respiratory tract aspirate or bronchoalveolar lavage sample should be collected and tested as a lower respiratory tract specimen. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a PUI is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset. See Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Patients Under Investigation (PUIs) for COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/guidelines-clinical-specimens.html>) and Biosafety FAQs for handling and processing specimens from suspected cases and PUIs (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/biosafety-faqs.html>).

For More Information

More information is available at the COVID-19 website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations

Updates for this link can be accessed if and when they are posted:

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2020/han00428.asp>

SLO County Health Department

As of this writing the latest County report states:

Public Health Response to Novel Coronavirus

Author: Public Health

Department

Date: 2/27/2020 9:14:36 AM

Share

Public Health updates on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated Information: 2/17/2020 11:15 AM

Feds Back Off Coronavirus Isolation at Camp Roberts

San Luis Obispo, CA—The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Officer received notice last evening that federal authorities no longer consider Camp Roberts a potential site to house any returning travelers who may or may not be infected with novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein said “We remain prepared to work with federal and state partners should future decisions turn back to Camp Roberts as a resource.” Dr. Borenstein also expressed her appreciation and admiration for “the prompt and professional response shown by our local hospitals, EMS providers, and County personnel.”

Original Article: 1/29/2020 9:37:41 AM

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department, along with other local health departments, is in close contact with state (CDPH) and federal (CDC) health officials who are closely monitoring a rapidly expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus (named COVID-2019).

The novel coronavirus was first identified December 2019, in Wuhan, China. While the vast majority of cases of this novel coronavirus, also known as COVID19, are in mainland China, other cases have been identified in a growing number of other international locations, including the United States. The CDC expects more cases are likely to be identified in the coming days, including more cases in the United States.

*To date, there is no widespread transmission occurring in the United States, and **there are NO cases of this novel coronavirus reported in San Luis Obispo County.***

The County Public Health Department is taking action to protect the public. This includes keeping our local health care providers and hospitals informed by providing consultation and sharing important guidance from the CDC and CDPH. We will continue to update local health care providers and the public as necessary.

At this time, San Luis Obispo County is at low risk for the novel coronavirus. Because public health officials are still learning about this virus, it is important that everyone do their part now by taking every day preventative measures to help decrease the spread of the flu and other respiratory viruses that are in our community.

- *Get your flu shot to protect against flu, which can produce symptoms similar to novel coronavirus.*
- *Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.*
- *Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*
- *Stay home when you are sick.*
- *Cover your cough or sneeze.*
- *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.*
- *Avoid nonessential travel to China, for the time being.*

If you were in China in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

As this is a new and evolving situation, we advise the public to check our website at www.slocounty.ca.gov/COVID19 for the most up-to-date information on the 2019 novel coronavirus.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, February 25, 2020 (Completed)

Item 7 - Fiscal Year 2018-19 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The item was received on the consent calendar without comment or discussion.

Background: The CAFR, along with the Budget, is one of the most important documents required of a government entity. It contains a number of current and historical tables which are of great value in understanding the financial status of the County. It also contains a letter from the County's independent auditors that renders an opinion as to whether the required data is properly displayed or if there are some "qualified matters." The County received an unqualified audit, which is good.

In our opinion, based on our audit and the report of other auditors, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, the discretely presented component unit, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the County, as of June 30, 2019, and the respective changes in financial position, and where applicable, cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

The matter has been placed on the consent calendar, which is too bad. It would be useful for the Auditor Controller and CEO to give a presentation and highlight some of the key trends.

For example, on the positive side the County is paying down its various types of capital investment debt and its pension obligation bonds at about 3% per year.


Some highlights include:

Discretionary property tax receipts were \$132 million in FY 2018-19, an increase of 5.6% over the prior year.

The total tax levy on secured property, which excludes unsecured property, direct charges, and school bonds, was \$549,868,636 for FY 2018-19, an increase of 5.2% from the previous year.

Property Transfer Tax is related to the value and number of real estate transactions during the year. The County's unincorporated areas' property transfer taxes decreased 5.6% in FY 2018-19; this is the first year with a decrease after eight years of increases.

The property tax delinquency rate of 0.9% has remained unchanged over the last four years. The rate continues to demonstrate a stable local economy.



This could be trouble. No one can afford the properties or is the wine boom over? Transfer tax can be a harbinger of future growth or lack thereof.

Table G
Outstanding Debt
June 30, 2019
(in thousands)

	Governmental Activities June 30, 2018	Governmental Activities June 30, 2019	Business-Type Activities June 30, 2018	Business-Type Activities June 30, 2019	Total June 30, 2018	Total June 30, 2019	Total Percent Change
Certificates of Participation	\$ 21,059	\$ 19,768	\$ 13,035	\$ 12,184	\$ 34,094	\$ 31,952	(6.3%)
Certificates of Participation from direct borrowings	5,883	5,762	2,971	2,922	8,854	8,684	(1.9%)
Pension Obligation Bonds	99,407	96,903	-	-	99,407	96,903	(2.5%)
State notes from direct borrowings	2,056	1,901	87,667	84,409	89,723	86,310	(3.8%)
Revenue Bonds	-	-	177,336	172,628	177,336	172,628	(2.7%)
General Obligation Bonds	-	-	8,658	8,162	8,658	8,162	(5.7%)
Assessment Bonds	-	-	76,746	75,358	76,746	75,358	(1.8%)
Total	\$ 128,405	\$ 124,334	\$ 366,413	\$ 355,663	\$ 494,818	\$ 479,997	(3.0%)

Of course this table presents only the principal amounts. With interest it is a lot more per the tables below, where the interest totals about \$208 million. Accordingly, \$479.9 million in principal from the table immediately above and the \$208 million from the tables below total \$687.9 million. The staff and some Board members like to talk about the \$8.1 million in General Obligation bonds as if they are the only real debt, because these are full faith and credit bonds of all the taxpayers. The other types of debt are paid from utility rates, or like the pension obligation bonds, are buried in payroll costs.

Annual debt service requirements for governmental activities as of June 30, 2019, are summarized as follows:

Year Ended June 30,	Governmental Activities					
	Certificates of Participation, including Direct Borrowings		Pension Obligation Bonds			Total
	Principal	Interest	Principal	Unaccrued Appreciation	Interest	
2020	\$ 1,379	\$ 1,030	\$ 8,258	\$ 222	\$ -	\$ 8,480
2021	1,431	974	8,337	703	-	9,040
2022	1,494	916	8,392	1,228	-	9,620
2023	1,558	850	8,428	1,797	-	10,225
2024	1,621	781	8,447	2,403	-	10,850
2025-2029	7,722	2,806	42,191	22,404	-	64,595
2030-2034	3,788	1,651	12,850	10,875	-	23,725
2035-2039	3,582	775	-	-	-	-
2040-2044	1,324	300	-	-	-	-
2045-2047	909	53	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 24,808	\$ 10,136	\$ 96,903	\$ 39,632	\$ -	\$ 136,535

Governmental Activities (Continued)

Year Ended June 30,	State Notes	
	Principal	Interest
2020	\$ 157	\$ 19
2021	158	17
2022	160	15
2023	162	14
2024	163	12
2025-2029	841	36
2030-2031	260	3
Total	\$ 1,901	\$ 116

Business-Type Activities

Year Ended June 30,	Certificates of Participation, including Direct Borrowings		State Notes		Revenue Bonds	
	Principal	Interest	Principal	Interest	Principal	Interest
2020	\$ 903	\$ 668	\$ 3,331	\$ 1,792	\$ 4,284	\$ 7,520
2021	942	628	3,409	1,714	4,510	7,298
2022	989	584	3,488	1,635	4,745	7,064
2023	1,038	536	3,571	1,553	4,990	6,817
2024	1,087	484	3,479	1,470	5,250	6,558
2025-2029	5,760	1,548	18,161	6,135	30,585	28,456
2030-2034	2,158	471	12,995	4,327	38,480	20,553
2035-2039	463	305	12,753	3,098	48,590	10,448
2040-2044	554	213	14,080	1,770	22,692	929
2045-2049	665	102	9,142	368	-	-
2050-2053	252	18	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 14,811	\$ 5,557	\$ 84,409	\$ 23,862	\$ 164,126	\$ 95,643

Business-Type Activities (Continued)

Year Ended June 30,	General Obligation Bonds		Assessment Bonds	
	Principal	Interest	Principal	Interest
2020	\$ 460	\$ 374	\$ 1,415	\$ 2,053
2021	485	351	1,460	2,013
2022	510	327	1,505	1,972
2023	540	300	1,541	1,931
2024	565	271	1,587	1,888
2025-2029	3,325	848	8,619	8,750
2030-2034	1,600	81	9,897	7,479
2035-2039	-	-	11,358	6,020
2040-2044	-	-	13,025	4,346
2045-2049	-	-	14,946	2,426
2050-2052	-	-	10,005	417
Total	\$ 7,485	\$ 2,552	\$ 75,358	\$ 39,295

Of course, then there is the unfunded accumulated actuarial liability for pensions which now stands at \$707 million assuming the system will achieve a minimum 7% return year in and year out over the next 17 years. Since we wrote this sentence last week, the stock market has dropped 3,500 points.



The following table presents the County's portion of the net pension liability calculated using the discount rate of 7.00%, as well as what the County's portion of the net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage-point lower, 6.00%, or one percentage-point higher, 8.00%, than the current rate:

	1% Decrease (in thousands) 6.00%	Discount Rate (in thousands) 7.00%	1% Increase (in thousands) 8.00%
County net pension liability	\$ 967,112	\$707,815	\$495,695

Obviously this one could become much more costly in an economic downturn.

In any case, \$707 million plus \$687 million (when everything is counted) is \$1,394,000 billion with a CAPITAL B.

Staff minimizes the concerns and defends the debt as being like your mortgage on your home. The problem is that the pension debt is not secured by real estate or anything else that could be sold. Likewise, they can't just go out and sell the Los Osos Sewer Treatment Plant, the Nacimiento Pipeline, and Chorro Regional Park if things go south. It's the taxpayers and ratepayers who are on the hook.

In any case, the CAFR is an important report and should be required reading for the officials, candidates, political party leadership, and others who claim to have a role in County government. We could actually have them all read it and the Budget, and then we could administer the final exam.

Item 17 - Request for authorization to apply for a Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA) grant in the total amount of \$4,000,000 for a period of 48 months (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2024), to expand mental health partnerships between the Behavioral Health Department and local schools throughout the county. The item authorizes the County to apply for a competitive grant that would expand its mental health programs for middle school students. The Board approved the item 5/0 after a little discussion stimulated by COLAB's comments below.


COLAB did not oppose the grant or the program, but simply commented that the matter lacked metrics by which progress could be assessed. Clearly the Board and staff had read the COLAB comments on Monday and defended the program and its lack of numbers via a set of staged interrogatories directed at a manager from the Behavioral Health Department. Even though they rehearsed, it was clear that they have no idea what the numbers might be.

In any case, the program may well be beneficial, as middle school is generally a terrible place except for the talented and/or socially mature few. Army boot camp and successive schools are a much more positive experience.

Inconveniently, buried in the general goals and objective language for the program is a list of the actual conditions that it seeks to remediate. What is stunning is that the Board letter did not contain any data about the current status of these conditions, even though about 12 schools already participate in the existing programs. The list displayed below is fairly succinct, and you would think that each

middle school would have the data as a matter of course. For those schools that are already in the County Behavioral Department's existing program, one would think that it would have the data, since it already ostensibly is working to reduce these conditions in the schools that it currently already serves.

Preventing negative outcomes in the targeted population, including, but not limited to:

- a. Suicide and attempted suicide*
- b. Incarceration*
- c. School failure or dropout*
- d. Unemployment*
- e. Prolonged suffering* 
- f. Homelessness*
- g. Removal of children from their homes*
- h. Involuntary mental health detentions*

Wonder what the metrics are for item e?

If there is no base data, how will management, the Board of Supervisors, the State, and eventually the citizen taxpayers ever know if the program works? In fact, how do they know if there is a significant problem? One of the most serious flaws of governments in general is failure to define and measure the problem that it is attempting to solve. Business schools and public administration schools continuously stress this point, but the professional managers, which they generate, seem to ignore it over and over.

The CEO should kick this type of incomplete item back to the Departments before allowing them on the agenda. Similarly the Board should refuse to hear the items and direct the staff to put them back on the agenda when they have the numbers.


Item 31 - FY 2020-21 Budget Preparation Update and State Budget Status. The Board heard the same overall presentation which it has heard for the past 9 years. There are the usual potential threats of a recession, state reduction in revenue flows to counties, and insufficient funds for roads, capital maintenance, and the homeless. But like the Viennese waltzing when Napoleonic armies were still in Germany, there is no sense of urgency.

In the near term the County is in decent shape and should not have a problem in preparing next year's budget, which will be adopted in June. A slight revenue expenditure gap is currently forecast for the General Fund. By the time the staff is rolling up all the revenues and expenditures in March, this should easily be eliminated. **Caveat: Since last week and per the discussion above, the County could face problems attendant to a Coronavirus pandemic if it emerges.**

Reserve and contingency accounts are in good shape.

The balancing model does not contain any estimate for salary increases that will be negotiated after November 19, 2019. Since staff knows which union contracts are currently in play, it could provide scenario cost estimates for 1%, 2%, and 3% increases overall on top of what is already built into the budget forecast.

	Forecast	Status Quo	\$ Diff	% Diff
Non-Dept Revenue	231,426,194	228,852,187	(2,574,007)	(1.11%)
Departmental Revenue	316,196,675	314,930,205	(2,781,546)	(0.88%)
Fund Balance Available	32,768,135	32,768,135	0	-
Total Revenue	580,391,004	575,035,451	(5,355,553)	(0.92%)
Salary and Benefits	314,459,315	314,489,540	30,225	0.01%
Non-Salary Expense	240,218,074	233,989,116	(6,228,958)	(3.58%)
5% Contingency	27,733,869	27,238,591	(495,278)	(1.79%)
Total Expenditures	582,411,258	575,717,247	(6,694,011)	(1.15%)
Available Funds/(Gap)	(2,020,255)	(681,796)		
Range	(\$0-5 M)	(\$0-1.5M)		


COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
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Ultimately, the real questions will come down to how the Board wishes to deal with the housing problem, homelessness, and the infrastructure deficit (water and roads), which hinders the development of housing. Note that the State, County and cities’ scheme of land rationing in the name of “efficient development” and climate change are major culprits in undermining normal housing development responsive to demand and market forces. Government created scarcity drives up prices.

Item 32 - Presentation and submittal of a resolution approving and authorizing the Chairperson or designee to sign the San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact. The Board praised the compact and adopted it unanimously. This Item constitutes a major opportunity to begin solving the housing and infrastructure issues of the County on a strategic basis. COLAB has been advocating such an approach for years. The system here was developed by the County and city executives, who have done a great job in articulating the framework and process.

Background: Last year the Board of Supervisors assigned staff to pursue a number of housing initiatives, some of which have been delivered, such as the Additional Dwelling Units Ordinance and the temporary increase in the housing-in-lieu fees (while exempting units of 2500 sq. ft. and under).

One of the barriers to housing development is lack of infrastructure, such as road capacity, water, drainage and flood control, and village center improvements (including sidewalks, parking, recreation facilities, etc.). These needs are under the control of separate agencies, including the County, 7 cities, community service districts, and the SLO County Council of Governments (SLOCOG). Each entity has its own capital improvement budget, financing limitations, and community priorities.

For this reason the County Executive Officer in cooperation with the 7 city managers in the County, SLOCOG, and a number of not-for-profit agencies are working on a regional strategy to work together on the regional economics of housing, infrastructure, jobs, and financing. In doing this it was realized that the governing bodies of the participating governments involved need to embrace the process, participate in the ultimate goal and subsequent program formulation, and ultimately

empower their respective staffs to work on the overall strategy and resulting program components. To this end a Regional Compact has been proposed. Each jurisdiction would commit to participate and support the overall goals.

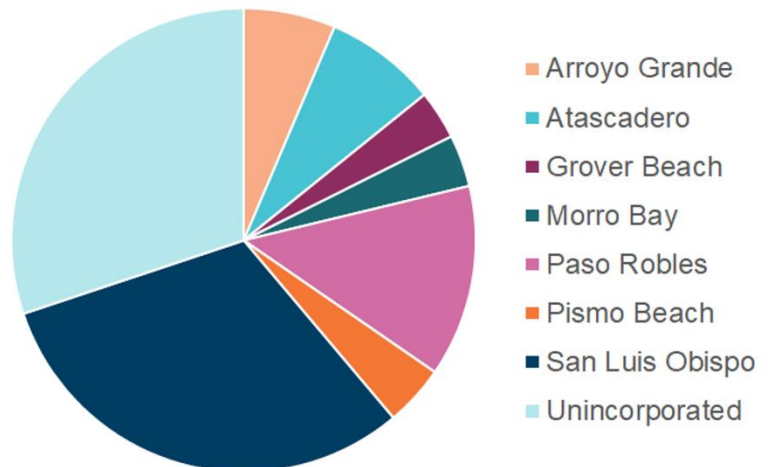
This is a major process step forward and provides an opportunity to make real progress on a regional basis.

The Regional Compact: The report seeks action on the first major milestone related to the County Board’s direction to develop a Regional Infrastructure and Housing Strategic Action Plan. Today’s action seeks approval of a countywide “Regional Compact” that *“creates a united regional framework to unlock our potential to develop an adequate supply of housing and resilient infrastructure that support our economic prosperity.”* It is intended to be adopted by nine local agencies – the County, the seven Cities, and SLOCOG. It serves as a vision and a launching off point for future recommended strategies and actions focused on addressing key housing and infrastructure issues.

Why strategize about regional planning for housing and infrastructure?

The San Luis Obispo County region is currently one of the least affordable places to buy a home in the United States – recently reported as the 8th least affordable region in the Nation. There are affordability challenges as well as a critical shortage of housing and, in some communities, the infrastructure and resources to support that housing need. In the near term, State law requires San Luis Obispo County’s local communities to collectively plan for 10,810 new housing units by 2028 and will require planning for additional growth in future decades.

Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA)
2019-2028 Total = 10,810



Meeting the current and future RHNA cycles will require local communities to plan and set policies for additional growth and prioritize investment in housing and infrastructure. Meeting the housing needs of the San Luis Obispo County region is a challenge shared by the County, all seven Cities, and SLOCOG, and it will take collective actions to overcome. With this great challenge also comes an opportunity for regional collaboration.

The Regional Compact sets a vision for future regional planning for housing and infrastructure: The local agencies and stakeholders, including the Housing Coalition (made up of representatives from Home Builders Association, SLO Chamber of Commerce, Housing Trust Fund, People’s Self Help Housing, Economic Vitality Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo, and Paso Robles Housing Authority) are working together to develop a first-ever **Regional Infrastructure and Affordable Housing Strategic Action Plan**. The Plan will be

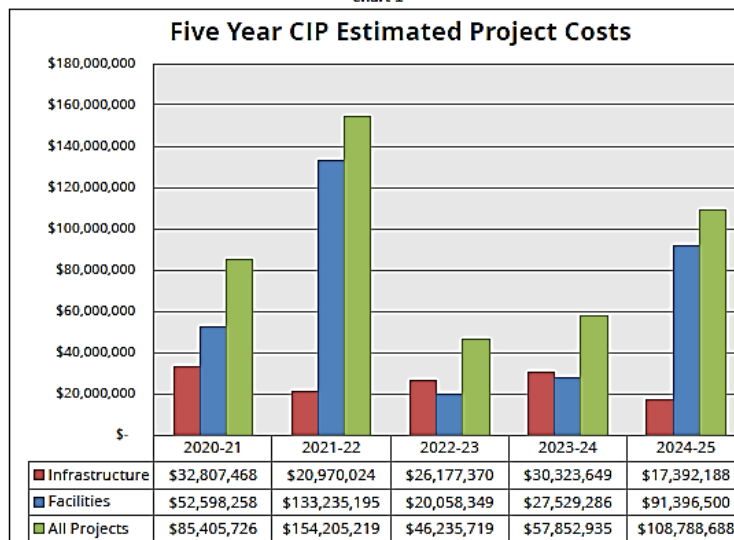
developed through the end of 2020 and will build a strong collaboration that integrates local agencies' efforts to:

- Coordinate existing efforts to address housing and infrastructure shortage countywide;
- Understand regional housing needs and identify ways to increase jobs/housing balance;
- Identify and prioritize critical infrastructure (water, wastewater and transportation) needs to support housing/resilient communities;
- Develop a long-term strategic action plan with a focused funding/implementation strategy.

Item 33 - Five Year (FY 20-21 through FY 24-25) \$608 million Capital Improvement Program Proposed. The Board received a short presentation and passed and certified that the CIP conforms to the County's General Plan. It is expected that it will be adopted in June along with the FY 20-21 operating budget.

Background: Each year the County updates the CIP. The CIP is the plan that contains the projects and funding for both new and replacement construction as well as major maintenance. A portion of the program supports infrastructure such as roads, bridges, sidewalks, traffic controls, storm water management structures, etc. A second portion supports facilities such as jails, firehouses, libraries, general office buildings, fleet and operations, maintenance buildings, and parks facilities.

Staff estimates that all in, the County needs to spend \$608 million over the next 5 years. Most of the costs are funded by service fees, permitting exactions, special assessments, grants, debt, and categorical Federal and State revenues.



FY 2020-21 Highlights

- 38 infrastructure projects are proposed for FY 2020-21 with a total expenditure of \$32.8 million.
- 43 facilities projects are proposed for funding in FY 2020-21 with an estimated cost of \$52.6 million.

The out years contain more estimates, as the exact revenues are not known. The large increase in facilities for FY 24-25 includes a new County office building.

Note: Some of these may be equipment, not office space. In any case it usually doesn't make sense for governments to lease office space, as they can borrow to build or acquire buildings at tax-exempt rates not available to commercial office developers.

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, February 27, 2020 (Completed)

Item 5 - Hearing to consider a request by the County of San Luis Obispo to amend Title 22 and Title 9 to update the maps of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin boundary and the Area of Severe Decline to be consistent with the Paso Robles Sub basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan and to incorporate a fallowing option into the Agricultural Offset Program. After a staff presentation, some negative public testimony, and some incoherent staff response, the Commission tabled the matter and continued it to April 23, 2019. As one speaker stated, "This is not ready for prime time." Staff was admonished to set up meetings with the Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association, and impacted community advisory councils.

There is considerable confusion and angst about the impact on intermittently irrigated fields and length and content of the "look back period." The look back period is a creature of the Paso Basin Water moratorium, which essentially prohibits new irrigation unless it is offset by a water reduction. The problem is that in dry years or under some market conditions farmers must fallow some or all of their fields to survive. Under the moratorium this initially meant that they would be subject to the offset provisions even though they had historically irrigated. For this reason the County established a look back period, which says, "If you irrigated 2 out of the past 5 years, you are not subject to the offset requirement." The problem is that a 5-year look back period may not be long enough.

For whatever reason, the County Counsel and the planning staff assert that to consider a period longer than 5 years, there has to be a CEQA analysis, which would take a year to perform.

These problems would be expanded into 103,000 new acres, which are mostly not irrigated but contain some irrigated acres and especially intermittently irrigated acres.

Background: The staff recommended that the boundary of the area subject to the Paso Basin water moratorium and its sub-component regulations be brought into conformance with State designated Paso Basin boundaries. This action is necessary to conform the boundaries of the area recognized by the State and the Paso Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

It means that the areas shown in green (in the map below) are added, and the areas shown in orange are deleted.

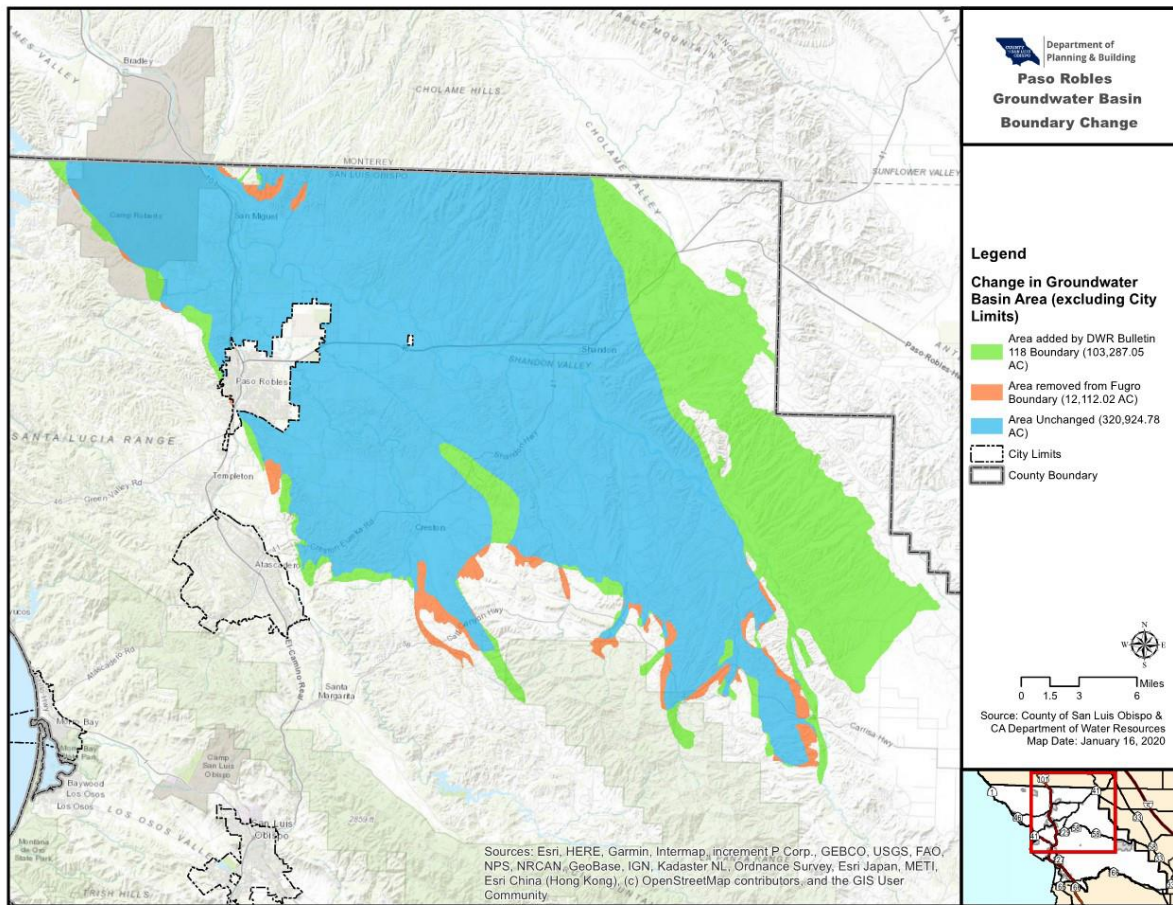
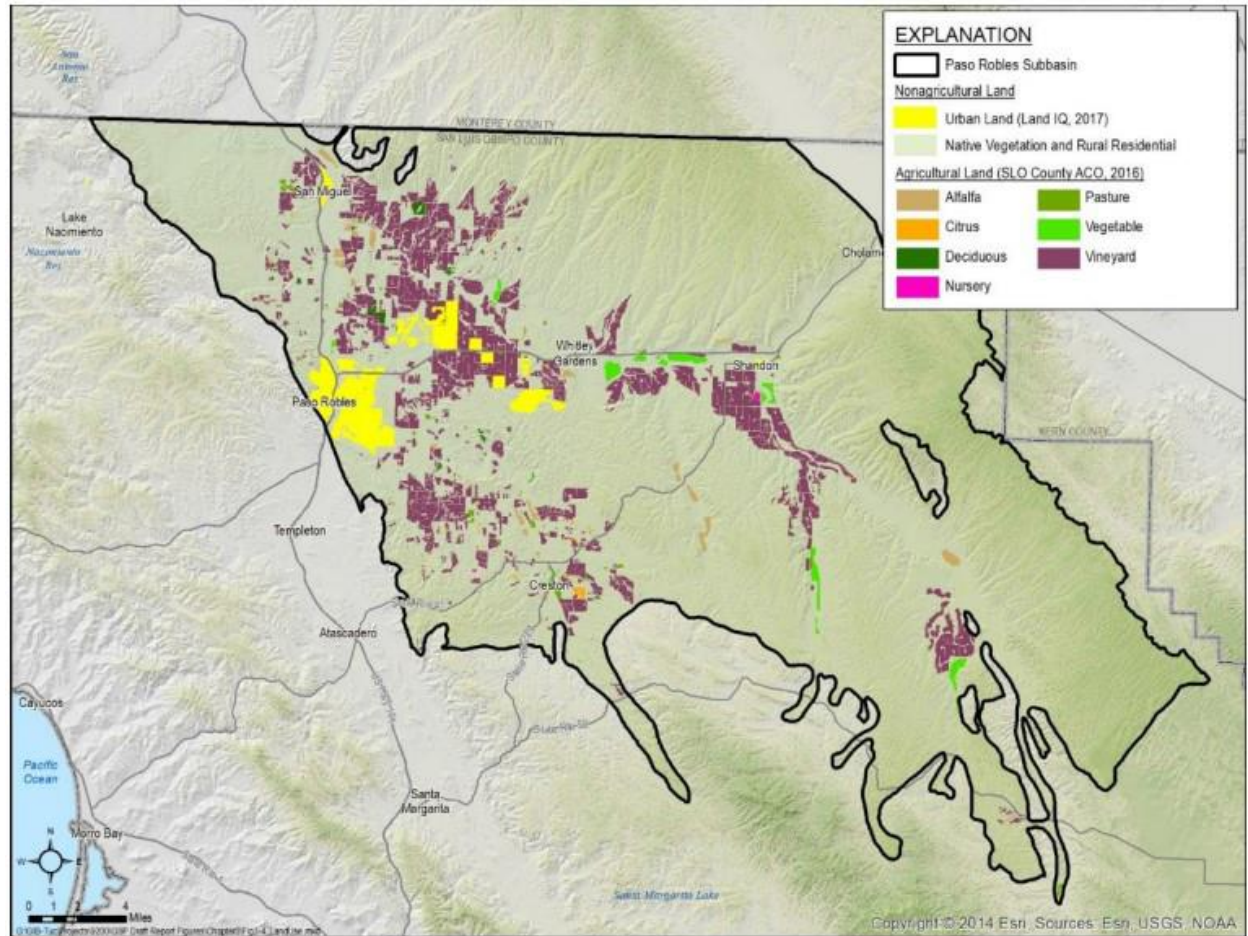


Figure 3: Change in Paso Basin Area

A summary of the differences between the Fugro and Bulletin 118 Paso Basin maps in terms of the number of included acres, properties, and property owners is shown in Table 1 below. **With this update, 945 properties (524 owners) that are not currently considered to be in the Paso Basin would now be within the basin. 301 properties (244 owners) that are currently considered to be in the Paso Basin would be removed.** Overall, the changes would be a 27% increase in area, 8% increase in affected properties, and 5% increase in affected property owners.

Table 1: Summary of Changes to the Paso Basin Map

Paso Robles Groundwater Basin			
Change	Area (acres)	Properties	Property Owners
Added	103,287	945	524
Removed	12,112	301	244
Net Change	91,175	644	280
Percent Change	27%	8%	5%



This change is actually pretty significant and many cattle ranches are included. The staff writes the impact off as diminimus, stating in part:

Most of the acres added to the Paso Basin in the updated map are properties in the eastern portion of the basin where the existing land use is native vegetation and rural residential uses without existing irrigated crop production on-site. The Agricultural Offset Ordinance (Section 22.30.204) would prohibit planting new commercial irrigated crops on these properties, (except for a 5 AFY de minimus exemption if the property is not located in the Area of Severe Decline) unless off-site agricultural offsets are re-allowed in the future. Most of the added area is composed of large grazing properties with low residential density that will be minimally impacted by the 1:1 offset requirement for new construction (Section 19.07.042). The Paso Basin Planning Area Standards (Section 22.94.025) would 1) require a 2:1 water offset and low-water using landscaping for projects approved through a discretionary land use permit, and 2) prohibit General Plan Amendments that increase water demand and land divisions in the added areas, excluding San Miguel and Shandon. The Phase 2 WNNd Amendments will re-examine the requirements of the 1:1 offset ordinances and the planning area standards.

Should the impacted ranchers wish to add a residence or irrigated crops, they will now be subject to the various basin moratorium requirements.

Phase 1 (effective December 5, 2019)

- Eliminate off-site agricultural offsets.*
- Extend the termination date to January 1, 2022.*
- Include a water duty factor for hemp and supplementally irrigated dry cropland.*
- Establish a process to determine water duty factors for crops not specified in the ordinance.*
- Require a recorded disclosure form instead of a deed restriction.*

Phase 1.5 (for review today, see Attachments 1 and 2)

- Update the maps of the Paso Basin and the Area of Severe Decline to be consistent with the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).*
- Create a fallowing registration*

Phase 2 (for review later, pending environmental determination)

For agricultural offsets:

- Expand the definition of the 5 acre-feet per year (AFY) per site one-time exemption to allow 25 AFY per site, considering parcel size.*
- Extend the lookback period beyond 5 years.*
- Discuss re-allowing off-site offsets.*

For non-agricultural (rural/urban) offsets:

- Revisit water offset fees and water usage assumptions.*
- Revisit the Paso Basin planning area standards prohibiting land divisions and General Plan Amendments.*
- Revisit the 1:1 water offset requirement for the Nipomo Mesa.*

It is not clear from the write-up if the staff discussed the impacts with the ranchers and farmers within the 100,000+ acre area to be added and subjected to the existing and impending regulations, not to mention the SGMA Groundwater Sustainability Plan itself. Neither the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau nor the San Luis Obispo Cattlemen's Association seemed to be aware of the proposal until COLAB brought it up to them.

COLAB IN DEPTH

IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME, LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES

THE PERVERSE PANIC OVER PLASTIC

JOHN TIERNEY

Why do our political leaders want to take away our plastic bags and straws? This question is even more puzzling than a related one that I've been studying for decades: Why do they want us to recycle our garbage?

The two obsessions have some common roots, but the moral panic over plastic is especially perverse. The recycling movement had a superficial logic, at least at the outset. Municipal officials expected to save money by recycling trash instead of burying or burning it. Now that recycling has turned out to be ruinously expensive while achieving little or no environmental benefit, some local officials—the pragmatic ones, anyway—are once again sending trash [straight to landfills and incinerators](#).

The plastic panic has never made any sense, and it's intensifying even as evidence mounts that it's not only a waste of money but also harmful to the environment, not to mention humans. It's been a movement in search of a rationale for half a century. During the 1970s, environmentalists like Barry Commoner wanted the government to restrict the use of plastic because it was made from petroleum, which we needed to hoard because we would soon run out of it. When the "energy crisis" proved a false alarm, environmentalists looked for new reasons to panic.

They denounced plastic for not being biodegradable in landfills. They blamed it for littering the landscape, clogging sewer drains, and contributing to global warming. Plastic from our "throwaway society" was killing vast numbers of sea creatures, according to *Blue Planet II*, a 2017 BBC documentary series that became an international hit. Its depictions of sea turtles, dolphins, and whales in jeopardy prompted Queen Elizabeth II to ban plastic straws and bottles from the royal estates, and the documentary has galvanized so many other leaders that greens celebrate the "*Blue Planet Effect*."

More than 100 countries now restrict single-use plastic bags, and Pope Francis has called for the global regulation of plastic. The European Union parliament has voted to ban single-use plastic straws, plates, and cutlery across the continent next year. In the United States, hundreds of municipalities and eight states have outlawed or regulated single-use plastic bags. New York and other cities have banned plastic-foam food containers, and more sweeping edicts are in the works. Greens in California are pushing a referendum to require all plastic packaging and single-use food ware in the state to be recyclable, and the EU has unveiled a similar plan. Celebrities and politicians photographed with the wrong beverage container or straw now endure online "plastic-shaming."

Some reformers are well-intentioned, but they're hurting their own cause. If you want to protect dolphins and sea turtles, you should take special care to place your plastic in the trash, not the recycling bin. And if you're worried about climate change, you'll cherish those gossamer grocery bags once you learn the facts about plastic.

Like the recycling movement, the plastic panic has been sustained by popular misconceptions. Environmentalists and their champions in the media have ignored, skewed, and fabricated facts to create several pervasive myths.

Your plastic straws and grocery bags are polluting the planet and killing marine animals. The growing amount of plastic debris in the seas is a genuine problem, but it's not caused by our "throwaway society." Environmental groups cite a statistic that 80 percent of the plastic debris in the

oceans comes from land-based sources, but good evidence has never supported that estimate, and recent research paints a different picture.

After painstakingly analyzing debris in the north central Pacific Ocean, where converging currents create the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch,” a team of scientists from four continents reported in 2018 that more than half the plastic came from fishing boats—mostly discarded nets and other gear. These discards are also the greatest threat to marine animals, who die not from plastic bags but from getting entangled in the nets. Another study, published last year by Canadian and South African researchers, traced the origins of plastic bottles that had washed up on the shore of the aptly named Inaccessible Island, an uninhabited landmass in the middle of the southern Atlantic Ocean. More than 80 percent of the bottles came from China and must have been tossed off boats from Asia traversing the Atlantic.

Some plastic discarded on land does end up in the ocean, but very little of it comes from consumers in the United States or Europe. Most of the labels on the plastic packaging analyzed in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch came from Asia, the greatest source of what researchers call “[mismanaged waste](#).” Of the plastic carried into oceans by rivers, a 2017 study in *Nature Communications* [estimated](#), 86 percent comes from Asia and virtually all the rest from Africa and South America. Developing countries don’t yet have good systems for collecting and processing waste, so some of it is simply dumped into or near rivers, and these countries’ primitive processing facilities let plastic leak into waterways.

It’s true that some plastic in America is littered on beaches and streets, and some of it winds up in sewer drains. But researchers have found that laws restricting plastic bags (which account for less than 2 percent of litter) and food containers do not reduce litter (a majority of which consists of cigarette butts and paper products). The resources wasted on these anti-plastic campaigns would be better spent on more programs to discourage littering and to pick up everything that’s discarded—a direct approach that has proved effective.

When you recycle plastic, you prevent it from polluting the oceans. This myth is based on the enduring delusion that plastic from curbside bins can be efficiently turned into other products. But sorting the stuff is so onerous and labor-intensive—and the resulting materials of so little value—that recycling plastic is hopelessly unprofitable in the United States and Europe. Municipalities expected to make money selling their plastic waste to local recyclers, but instead they’ve had to pay to get rid of it, mostly by shipping it to Asian countries with low labor costs. The chief destination for many years was China; but two years ago, China banned most imports, so the plastic waste has been diverted to countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

That means that some of the plastic from your recycling bin has probably ended up in the ocean because it has gone to a country with a high rate of “mismanaged waste.” At the rudimentary recycling plants in Asia, [some of the plastic waste](#) leaks out into the environment, and much of the imported waste doesn’t even reach a legitimate recycling plant. [Journalists](#) and [environmentalists](#) have been collecting horror stories in Malaysia and Indonesia of Western plastics piling up at illegal dumps and [spewing toxins](#) when they’re burned in backyard kitchens. The people living near the dumps and recycling operations complain that foreign plastics are fouling their air and polluting their rivers.

The good news is that these countries are starting to share China's reluctance to accept the stuff from our recycling bins. Waste managers in America and Europe lament that their warehouses are overflowing with bales of plastic recyclables that nobody will take off their hands, and they've been forced to send the bales to local landfills and incinerators. It would have been smarter to do that in the first place instead of running a costly recycling program, but at least they're preventing that plastic from polluting the ocean. You can do your own bit for marine animals—and your town's budget—by throwing your plastic straight into the trash.

Single-use plastic bags are the worst environmental choice at the supermarket. Wrong: they're the best choice. These high-density polyethylene bags are a marvel of economic, engineering, and environmental efficiency: cheap and convenient, waterproof, strong enough to hold groceries but so thin and light that they require scant energy, water, or other natural resources to manufacture and transport. Though they're called single-use, surveys show that most people reuse them, typically as trash-can liners.

Once discarded, these bags take up little room in the landfill, and the fact that they're not biodegradable is a plus, not a minus, because they don't release methane or any other greenhouse gas, as decomposing paper and cotton bags do. The bags' tiny quantity of carbon, extracted from natural gas, goes back underground, where it can be safely sequestered from the atmosphere (and the ocean) in a modern landfill with a sturdy lining.

Every other grocery bag has a bigger environmental impact, as repeatedly demonstrated by environmental life-cycle analyses of the bags and by surveys of consumer behavior. Paper bags and reusable tote bags require more water to manufacture and more energy to produce and transport, which means a bigger carbon footprint. To compensate for that bigger initial footprint of a paper bag, according to the [United Kingdom's environmental agency](#), you'd have to reuse it at least four times, which virtually no one does. The typical paper grocery bag is used just once (and takes up 12 times more landfill space than a plastic one).

People do reuse tote bags, but not as often as they plan to. One survey found that consumers forget to bring the bags to the supermarket nearly half the time. To offset the initial carbon footprint of a cotton tote bag, you'd have to use it 173 times, but the typical tote is used just 15 times, so the net effect is about nine times more carbon emissions than a thin plastic bag.

Environmentalists who have looked at these numbers advise greens to shun cotton bags (even their beloved organic ones) in favor of plastic tote bags, because a bag of nonwoven polypropylene needs to be used just 14 times to offset its initial carbon footprint. At first glance, that looks like a slight net plus for the atmosphere, given that the typical tote is used 15 times. But that benefit disappears once you consider another consequence observed in places that have banned single-use bags: when consumers are deprived of the bags they were using as bin liners, they [start buying plastic substitutes](#) that are thicker than the banned grocery bags—and thus have a bigger carbon footprint.

So the net effect of banning plastic grocery bags is more global warming. Exactly how much more depends on which researchers' life-cycle analysis you choose, but there's definitely more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, as Julian Morris and Brian Seasholes of the [Reason Foundation](#) concluded. Using the range of available analyses, they calculated that San Francisco's plastic-bag ban had caused

the greenhouse emissions related to grocery bags to rise by at least 9 percent, and possibly to more than double.

Moreover, as the Reason researchers note, those calculations understate the greenhouse impact because they're based on analyses that omitted an important factor: the need to wash tote bags to avoid contaminating food with bacteria that leaked from last week's groceries. Most shoppers don't bother to clean their bags—a study at supermarkets in California and Arizona found large numbers of bacteria in almost all the reusable bags—but health authorities advise washing them weekly in hot water to avoid food-borne illnesses. Whether people clean by hand or throw the bags into the washer and dryer, they're consuming energy and adding still more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

If our goals are to reduce carbon emissions and plastic pollution, we can take some obvious steps. Stop forcing consumers to use grocery bags and other products that increase emissions. Stop exporting plastic waste to countries that allow it to leak into the ocean. Help those countries establish modern systems for collecting and processing their own plastic waste. Send plastic waste straight to landfills and incinerators. Step up the enforcement of laws and treaties that restrict nations from polluting the ocean and that prohibit mariners from littering the seas.

But politicians and environmentalists have other ideas. They're doubling down on their mistakes by banning more plastic products and demanding alternatives that are more expensive, less convenient, and worse for the environment. Even experts familiar with the facts succumb to magical thinking. Yes, they acknowledge, we shouldn't be exporting our plastic waste to Asia, but the solution is to recycle it at home. And yes, that's impractical today, but everything will change after we create a "circular economy," which merely requires a transformation of society. Guided by wise central planners, manufacturers will redesign their products and retool their factories so that everything can be reused or recycled, and consumers will painstakingly sort everything into just the right recycling bin, and we will all live happily ever after in a world with "zero waste."

This fantasy isn't merely a waste of time and money. It is interfering with practical solutions to dealing with plastic pollution. Improving sanitation systems was traditionally a top priority for public-health officials and foreign-aid donors, but it has been neglected as they've redirected money and attention to "sustainable development" schemes for recycling and conserving water and energy. This shift in priorities has hampered the development of effective waste-management systems that would keep plastic out of the oceans, according to Mikko Paunio, an epidemiologist in Finland who has studied public-health programs in rich and poor countries around the world.

"Ideologically motivated environmentalists in the 1980s and their dreams of recycling and a 'circular economy' are the ultimate cause of the marine waste problem," [he concludes](#), "because they have discouraged development of municipal waste schemes in Asia and Africa, and because they have encouraged developed nations to use management schemes that make it hard or expensive to deal with waste and therefore tend to 'leak' to the environment, sometimes catastrophically so."

Even if the dream of a circular economy were possible, it would accomplish remarkably little, at enormous expense. Suppose a miraculous revolution occurs in consumer behavior. Suppose you used the tote bags with the lowest carbon footprint (the ones of nonwoven polypropylene) every time you went to the supermarket, and you conscientiously washed the bags with water heated by solar panels

on your roof. Over the course of a year, the Reason researchers calculate, you would reduce your carbon emissions by less than the amount spewed by the typical car in two trips to the supermarket. You could have done more for the planet by eliminating those car trips, and there's a convenient way to do that a lot more often than twice a year: order your groceries online from a service like FreshDirect or Peapod. University of Washington engineers [estimate](#) that online grocery shopping can reduce the related carbon emissions by at least half—clearly a more effective method than banning plastic grocery bags.

Then why do environmentalists hector consumers about plastic bags instead of urging them to shop online? Why not focus on something that not only reduces greenhouse emissions but also makes people's lives easier? The short answer: because the plastic panic isn't really about saving the planet—and it's certainly not about making people's lives easier.

“San Francisco's plastic-bag ban caused greenhouse emissions from grocery bags to rise by at least 9 percent.”

I have been trying to understand the green psyche since 1996, when I set a record for hate mail at the *New York Times Magazine* with a cover story titled “[Recycling Is Garbage](#).” It was obvious then that the cheapest way to dispose of trash was to bury it in a landfill, and that there would never be a shortage of landfill space, yet people were clamoring to pay extra for the privilege of sorting their own waste. I concluded that recycling was a sacrament to expiate guilt, a rite of atonement for the sin of buying too much stuff. I subsequently [found support](#) for that theory from James B. Twitchell's 2002 analysis of consumer passions, *Lead Us into Temptation*. “While we claim to be wedded to responsible consumption,” he wrote, “we spend a lot of our time philandering. Trash is lipstick on the collar, the telltale blond hair.” Recycling is our way of saying, “I'm sorry, honey.”

The plastic panic involves consumer guilt, too, but that explains just a small part of it. While recycling programs have long enjoyed [broad public support](#) (even as [the economics have worsened](#)), similar enthusiasm doesn't exist for restricting plastic. Market researchers [have found](#) that only 15 percent of consumers care enough about environmental issues to change their buying habits and that 50 percent will change only if it comes at no extra cost or hassle. Yet politicians eagerly go on banning plastic bags and looking for more ways to annoy voters, like California's new law [forbidding hotels](#) from providing disposable plastic toiletries.

Why would the California legislature and governor deprive their constituents of those handy little bottles of shampoo? It seemed bizarre to me until I discovered scholars' analysis of just this sort of petty tyranny in the past. Today's plastic bans represent a revival of sumptuary laws (from *sumptus*, Latin for “expense”), which fell out of favor during the Enlightenment after a long and inglorious history dating to ancient Greece, Rome, and China. These restrictions on what people could buy, sell, use, and wear proliferated around the world, particularly after international commerce increased in the late Middle Ages.

Worried by the flood of new consumer goods and by the rising affluence of merchants and artisans, rulers across Europe enacted thousands of sumptuary laws from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. These included exquisitely detailed rules governing dresses, breeches, hose, shoes, jewelry, purses, bags, walking sticks, household furnishings, food, and much more—sometimes covering the

whole population, often specific social classes. Gold buttons were verboten in Scotland, and silk was forbidden in Portuguese curtains and tablecloths. In Padua, no man could wear velvet hose, and no one but a cavalier could adorn his horse with pearls. It was illegal at dinner parties in Milan to serve more than two meat courses or offer any kind of sweet confection. No Englishwoman under the rank of countess could wear satin striped with silver or gold, and a German burgher's wife could wear only one golden ring (and then only if it didn't have a precious stone).

Religious authorities considered these laws essential to curb “the sin of luxury and of excessive pleasure,” in the words of Fray Hernando de Talavera, the personal confessor to Spain's Queen Isabella. “Now there is hardly even a poor farmer or craftsman who does not dress in fine wool and even silk,” he wrote, echoing the common complaint that imported luxuries were upsetting the social order and causing everyone to spend beyond their means. In justifying her sumptuary edicts, England's Queen Elizabeth I lamented that the consumption of imported goods had led to “the impoverishing of the Realme, by dayly bringing into the same of superfluitie of forreine and unnecessarie commodities.”

But like the Americans who go on using plastic bags, the queen's subjects refused to give up their “unnecessarie commodities.” The sumptuary laws failed to make much impact in England or anywhere else, despite the rulers' best efforts. Their agents prowled the streets and inspected homes, confiscating taboo luxuries and punishing violators—usually with fines, sometimes with floggings or imprisonment. But the conspicuous consumption continued. If silk was banned, people would find another expensive fabric to flaunt. Rulers had to keep amending their edicts, but they remained one step behind, and often the laws were flouted so widely that the authorities gave up efforts to enforce them.

For historians, the great puzzle of sumptuary laws is why rulers went on issuing them for so many centuries despite their ineffectiveness. The specific explanations vary from country to country, but there's a common theme: the laws persisted because they benefited the right people. In a recent collection of scholarly essays, *The Right to Dress*, the laws' appeal is summarized by Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, a medieval historian at the University of Bologna: “Whatever the lawmakers' original or prevailing purpose might have been, sumptuary laws were useful instruments of rule.”

The laws didn't curb the public's sinful appetite for luxury or contribute to national prosperity, but they comforted the social elite, protected special interests, enriched the coffers of church and state, and generally expanded the prestige and power of the ruling class. For nobles whose wealth was eclipsed by nouveau-riche merchants, the laws reinforced their social status. The restrictions on imported luxuries shielded local industries from competition. The fines collected for violations provided revenue for the government, which could be shared with religious leaders who supported the laws. Even when a law wasn't widely enforced, it could be used selectively to punish a political enemy or a commoner who got too uppity.

The laws persisted until the waning of royal sovereignty and church authority, starting in the eighteenth century. As intellectuals promoted new rights for commoners and extolled the economic benefits of free trade, sumptuary laws came to be seen as an embarrassing anachronism. Yet the urge to rule inferiors never goes away.

Today's plastic bans are even less rational than the old sumptuary laws, but they, too, benefit elites. Cheap plastic products have been a boon to the poor and the middle class, which just makes plastic seem even tackier to their social superiors. The old-money scions who used to join the clergy today do their preaching as green activists, and they've got the power to impose their preferences now that environmentalism is essentially the new state religion in progressive strongholds. They can lord it over the modern merchant class—the corporations desperately trying to curry social favor by touting their green credentials and making the proper financial obeisance. The plastic panic gives politicians and greens the leverage to extract contributions from companies afraid that they'll be regulated out of business. It provides fund-raising pitches for greens and subsidies for environmentally correct companies and nonprofit groups.

Most important, the plastic panic gives today's political rulers and modern nobility a renewed sense of moral superiority. With her half-dozen regal residences, Queen Elizabeth II has one of the world's largest carbon footprints, but now that she has banned plastic bottles and straws, she can share the first Queen Elizabeth's dismay at her subjects' "inordinate excess." No matter how much fuel politicians and environmentalists burn on their flights to international climate conferences, they can still feel virtuous as they issue their edicts to grocery shoppers.

For now, their power seems secure, but perhaps the public will eventually come to agree with Adam Smith. In *The Wealth of Nations*, he dismissed sumptuary laws as not just terrible economics but also rank hypocrisy. "It is the highest impertinence and presumption, therefore, in kings and ministers to pretend to watch over the economy of private people, and to restrain their expense, either by sumptuary laws, or by prohibiting the importation of foreign luxuries," Smith wrote. "They are themselves always, and without any exception, the greatest spendthrifts in the society. Let them look well after their own expense, and they may safely trust private people with theirs." We could even be trusted with our plastic bags and straws.

John Tierney is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's quarterly publication, City Journal. Tierney has significant experience in print and media, recently joining City Journal after more than two decades as a reporter and columnist with the New York Times.

Tierney has written about urban politics, economics, and culture in his column, "The Big City," which appeared in the New York Times Magazine and in the paper's Metro section, and which won the New York State Publishers Association Award. He has also written columns in the Times about national politics and science.

Prior to joining the Times, Tierney was a contributing editor to Discover and Health magazines, a staff writer at Science 81-85 magazine, a reporter for the Washington Star and the Bergen Record, and a freelance writer whose reporting took him to all seven continents. His work has been widely published, including in The Atlantic, Esquire, New York, Reader's Digest, Vogue, the Chicago Tribune, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post.

Tierney's latest book, Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength (Penguin Press, 2011), was a New York Times best-seller and has been translated into 20 languages. Co-written with the social psychologist Roy F. Baumeister, Willpower tells the story of scientists' rediscovery of willpower and its implications outside the laboratory.

EMPTY WORDS ON HOMELESSNESS

BY STEPHEN EIDE

California governor Gavin Newsom devoted almost his entire State of the State address to homelessness, though [observers](#) who follow the issue recognized no new analysis or important proposals. [Some critics charge that](#) Newsom lacks strategic vision. Ten to 15 years ago, homelessness policymakers had vision to spare: they were ramping up their “campaign to end homelessness,” and Newsom, then mayor of San Francisco, participated energetically in that nationwide push. It wasn’t successful, but the “end homelessness” rhetoric has endured. In his speech this week, Newsom asserted—as if we’re still in 2004—“I don’t *think* homelessness can be solved; I *know* homelessness can be solved.” Bold applause lines and “make no small plans” promises long ago ceased to be inspiring—or even credible—for most people.

The speech’s best ideas had to do with mental health. Newsom called for more use of conservatorships and outpatient civil commitment, both of which have the potential to stabilize thousands of seriously mentally ill Californians. Californians have heard hopeful proposals about mental health many times before, however; time will tell. Newsom praised [a recent initiative](#) in San Francisco that modestly expands conservatorship for the mentally ill, though local progressives opposed it.

Newsom said nothing about inpatient psychiatric care. Amid the flood of homelessness-policy reports coming out from public task forces and commissions, inpatient psychiatric care receives virtually no attention. It’s an area where the Trump administration, [with its recent push to eliminate the so-called IMD Exclusion](#)—which bans Medicaid funding for mentally ill adults in specialized psychiatric institutions—is doing more for the homeless than California’s leadership.

California particularly needs state leadership on homelessness due to the uniquely regional character of the crisis. Local policies on homelessness in California don’t stay confined within local borders. Regardless of what role personal choices did or didn’t play in their circumstances, the homeless clearly do exercise some preference about which communities are best to be homeless in. Progressive localities offering generous municipal services for the homeless often resent how they wind up providing those services for people from other communities, whose governments don’t invest as much in supportive housing, shelter, or outreach.

Newsom declined to offer state leadership on the issue of greatest regional importance: law enforcement. With the Ninth Circuit’s 2018 ruling in *Martin v. Boise*, which effectively prevents municipalities from outright bans on street camping, cities possess fewer options on disorder-related questions, such as how to deal with mass homeless encampments. Say you’re the mayor of a modest-size city in the Central Valley, and you want to do something about a downtown tent encampment. As soon as you start raising the issue, you get a letter from a Los Angeles-based lawyer threatening to

sue if you don't adhere to the ACLU's dictates on encampment policy. Most local officials in that scenario will back down from trying their case in court. Thus, the practical effect of *Martin* is policymaking by legal advocates. This satisfies no one, but to what extent can cities push back? Can a mayor of, say, Sacramento expect broad-based support if he decides to make public disorder his Number One priority?

Oftentimes, the simplest explanation is the best. California politicians don't want to commit themselves on public disorder because fence-sitting is the safer alternative. Polls in California show strong support for the goal of reducing public disorder but more ambiguous support as to the means. How much firmness the public would tolerate isn't clear. [One recent survey](#) of 1,000 likely voters found that about three-fourths supported coupling encampment restrictions with a "right to shelter" policy. That's not too far from the official position of the Ninth Circuit and legal advocates. Limiting street camping on the condition that cities be equipped to offer indoor shelter to every individual who may request it is unduly burdensome, even for well-off communities. But localities can expect little help or guidance from Governor Newsom on this thorny issue.

Given the current level of concern about homelessness in California, it would be strange had Newsom not devoted his State of the State to the topic. San Francisco's and Los Angeles's crises in the streets are internationally notorious, much like the South Bronx in the late 1970s, though at that point New York's murder rate had yet to peak. Sometimes, policy challenges have to get worse before they get better. Californians' confidence in a solution to homelessness is very low. Could the worst be yet to come?

Stephen Eide is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and contributing editor of City Journal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS





REVISED NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND DRAFT WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR AGRICULTURAL WASTE DISCHARGES FROM IRRIGATED LANDS WITHIN THE CENTRAL COAST REGION

NOTE: CLICK HERE TO READ THE DRAFT ORDER

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/docs/ag_order4_renewal/2020feb/dao.pdf

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (Central Coast Water Board), as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Control Act (CEQA), has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for waste discharge requirements regulating the discharge of agricultural waste from irrigated lands within the Central Coast Region, "Agricultural Order for Discharges to Irrigated Lands" (Agricultural Order 4.0). The Central Coast Water Board has also prepared the Draft Agricultural Order 4.0. Both documents are available for public review and comment.

The public review period for the Draft EIR and Draft Agricultural Order 4.0 is from February 21, 2020 until April 6, 2020. During the public review period, Central Coast Water Board staff will hold public workshops on the Draft EIR and Draft Agricultural Order 4.0; staff will provide notice at least 10-days prior to the workshops.

The proposed project (Draft Agricultural Order 4.0) is the issuance of a permit regulating waste discharges from irrigated lands throughout the central coastal region. The purpose of Agricultural Order 4.0 is to protect and restore beneficial uses and achieve water quality objectives specified in the Basin Plan for commercial irrigated agricultural areas in the central coast region. The proposed project would replace the existing permit regulating agricultural discharges (Agricultural Order 3.0).

The Draft EIR identified potentially significant environmental impacts to agricultural resources.

Document Availability

Electronic copies of the Draft EIR and Draft Agricultural Order 4.0 can be obtained from the Central Coast Water Board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/ag_order4_renewal.html.

Hardcopies of the Draft EIR and Draft Ag. Order are available at the Central Coast Water Board, 895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

Submission of Written Comments

Written comments are due April 6, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. and may be submitted via email to AgNOI@waterboards.ca.gov with “Comments on Draft EIR” or “Comments on Draft Ag Order 4.0” in the subject line. While email submittal is preferred, we will accept written comments at: Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP), Central Coast Water Board, 895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR PENDING GENERAL ORDERS

Ex parte communications are allowed in this matter subject to the disclosure requirements of Water Code section 13287, as explained in http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/laws_regulations/docs/exparte.pdf. Any communications between interested persons and board members (other than at a noticed board meeting where Agricultural Order 4.0 is on the agenda or submitted as a comment letter in compliance with this or another public notice) must be disclosed by the interested person within seven working days of the communication. A sample disclosure form is available at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/publications_forms/forms/docs/central_coast_disclosure.pdf.

Pursuant to the Central Coast Water Board’s direction on January 31, 2020, ex parte communications are prohibited for a period beginning 14 days before the Board meeting at which the proposed Agricultural Order 4.0 is scheduled for Board action. If the Central Coast Water Board does not take action during the scheduled meeting date, the ex parte communications prohibition will be lifted. The prohibition on ex parte communications will be reinstated for 14 days before the day of the Board meeting to which the decision is continued. At this time, the Board meeting at which the proposed

Agricultural Order 4.0 will be considered for Board action has not been scheduled. The Board meeting at which the proposed Agricultural Order 4.0 will be considered is scheduled for May 28 – 29, 2020.

FUTURE NOTICES

During the public review period the Central Coast Water Board staff will hold public workshops on the Draft EIR and Draft Agricultural Order 4.0. Staff will provide notice of these workshops at least 10-days prior. Any change in the date, time and place of the workshops will be noticed on the automated email list for the Irrigated Lands Program and posted on the Central Coast Water Board’s website. To subscribe to the automated email list, please visit the Central Coast Water Board’s website at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg3_subscribe.html and choose “Agricultural Discharges” and “CEQA – Agricultural Order 4.0, March 2020.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information, visit the Central Coast Regional Board’s Agricultural Order Renewal website
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ag_waivers/ag_order4_renewal.html or contact the Irrigated Lands Program ILRP at (805) 549-3148 or at



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The advertisement features a black background with yellow and white text. At the top, it says "THE ANDY CALDWELL SHOW" in large, bold, yellow letters. Below this, there are two radio station logos: "AM 1440 KUHL • the information station" and "AM 1290 Santa Barbara News-Press Radio". At the bottom, it says "Listen to Andy Live Monday Thru Friday 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM". On the right side, there is a small photo of Andy Caldwell, a man with a mustache wearing headphones and smiling.



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