



WEEKLY UPDATE MARCH 7 - 13, 2021

THIS WEEK

NO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

PLANNING COMMISSION

NEW HOTEL IN CAYUCOS – WILL TEST ANTI-VACATION RENTAL CROWD

INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

FREE WET GARBAGE BUCKETS FOR YOUR KITCHEN?

POSSIBLE REPEAL OF THE POLYSTYRENE BAN – LEFT IS BESIDE ITSELF



CURRENT ISSUES

COVID DECLINING RAPIDLY

COUNTY MOVES TO RED TIER - WHAT IF WE JUST OPENED UP?

EARLY WARNING

COASTAL COMMISSION MEETING ON THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021

RECOMMENDATION IS TO SHUT DOWN OCEANO DUNES OFF-ROAD ACTIVITY

US SOUTHERN BORDER COLLAPSING

FEDERAL VOTING BILL PROMOTES FRAUD

LAST WEEK

BOS MEETING

**WATER SALES, WATER BANKING, AND MAD NORTH COUNTY PEOPLE
FY 2021-22 BUDGET SHOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN NEEDS TO DISCLOSE UNFUNDED NEEDS
RENT RELIEF PROGRAM EXPANDED, EXTENDED, BUT CAN IT BE ENDED?
DIABLO SHUTDOWN STILL ON TRACK & ENERGY RATES TO JUMP
CALLERS STAGE SEXY AUDIO COMMENTARY AT BOS MEETING**

COLAB IN DEPTH

SEE PAGE 21

SoCal DESALINATION PLANT INCHES TOWARDS APPROVAL BY EDWARD RING

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 (Not Scheduled)

The Board is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, March 11, 2021 (Scheduled)

Item 5 - Hearing to consider a request by Jay and Lisa Cobb for a Development Plan/Coastal Development Permit (DRC2019-00297) to allow for the construction of a three-story, 17-unit hotel with onsite public amenities for passive and active recreational activities. The proposed project is within the Recreation land use category and is located on the south side of North Ocean Ave within the Locarno area of the community of Cayucos. The project site is in the Estero

Planning Area. This one should be interesting. The staff recommends approval of the permit. The people who are opposed to vacation rentals say that the visitors should stay in hotels. Here is the chance to approve a small beachfront hotel.

Let's see what the Planning Commission does? Then, if anyone appeals an approval to the Board and it is approved there, let's see what the Coastal Commission does. In any case, the staff has recommended recommended approval but has imposed 10 pages worth of 60 separate backbreaking conditions. God only knows what the exaction fees will be. The conditions expropriate private property for public use:

Approved Development

1. This approval authorizes the construction of:

a. A three-story, 20,114 square foot, 17-unit hotel with the following guest amenities:

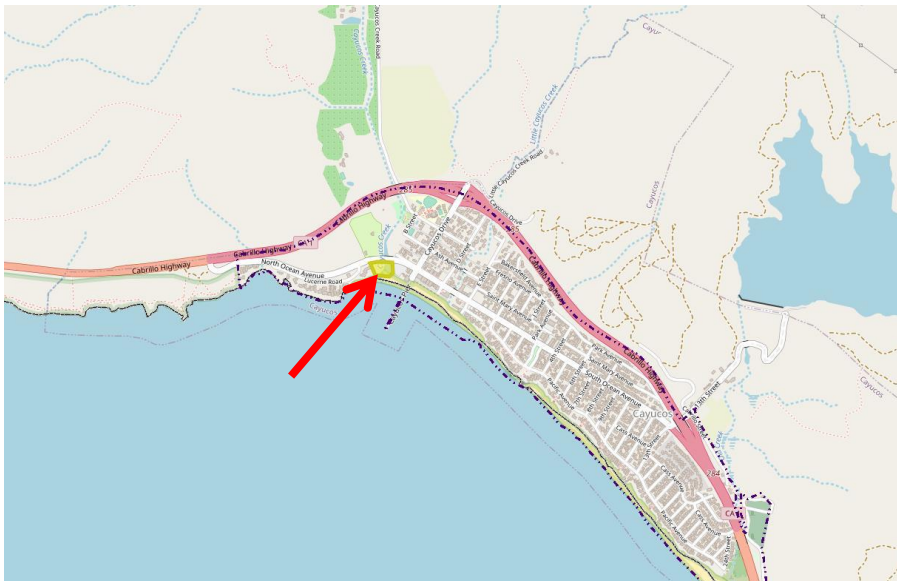
a 870-square-foot day spa / health center, a 960-square-foot gift shop, a 1,120-square-foot dining facility, a 550-square-foot bar, and an outdoor swimming pool.

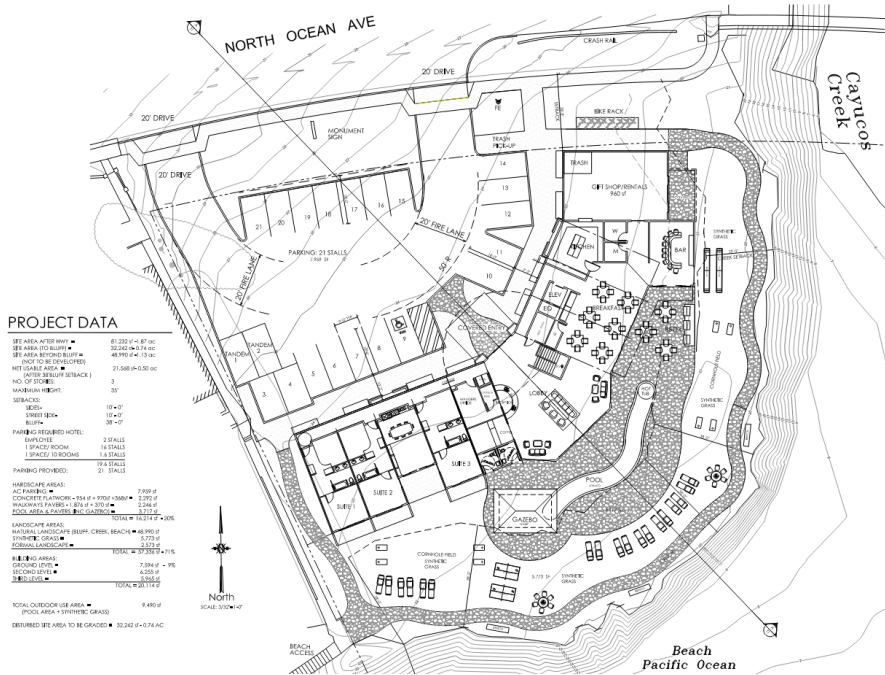
b. A public coastal access walkway along the bluff and public recreation amenities, **including outdoor games and lounge areas**. **Does this mean that people not staying at the hotel or eating in the restaurant can use the games and lounge areas?**

Lateral Access

25. Prior to issuance of construction permits, the applicant shall execute and record an offer of dedication in a form subject to the approval of County Counsel for lateral access which shall include 25 feet of dry sandy beach available at all times during the year (pursuant to the requirements of Section 23.04.420 of the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance).

As someone asked, "Where can you build a new beachfront hotel in San Luis Obispo County?" One tight-jawed enviro answered "Oakland."





33



San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority Meeting of Wednesday, March 10, 2021(Scheduled) 1:30 PM

Item 9 - PURCHASE OF FOOD SCRAP PAILS FOR MULTIFAMILY TENANTS AND SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL PER SB 1383. **It's just one thing after another.** Now you have to keep your wet food scraps (meat, fruit, veggie, fish guts, or whatever?) in a separate bucket provided by the IWMA. The write-up states in part:

SB 1383 mandates jurisdictions are to divert food waste from landfill disposal. To facilitate this effort, IWMA will need to supply ~5,000 food scrap "pails" to non-commercial generators (single-family homes and tenants of multi-family residential units). The pails provide a convenient way for program participants to store their food scraps and consolidate trips to their green bin, thus avoiding putting

this material in the trash. ¹The IWMA has purchased these pails in the past and has a small supply but needs to order 5,000 units. Time is of the essence as ~500 jurisdictions in California are required to implement SB 1383 by January 2022, and the availability of these products is likely to dwindle.

What ever happened to garbage disposals? Why should the government be buying people kitchen utensils such as these buckets? A lot people use their empty milk cartons for this stuff. Where does the dog poop and cat box litter go?



Item 10 - INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE NO. 2021-3-1 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 2019-1 REGARDING THE REGULATION OF POLYSTYRENE AND EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE (EPS) FOOD CONTAINERS AND PRODUCTS. Per the direction of the IWMA Board (on a close 7/6 vote) last month, staff has prepared an ordinance to rescind the polystyrene ban which was adopted back in 2019. It never took effect because the IWMA Board pended it due to the COVID lockdown. Even the most loony enviro sycophantic electeds figured that banning polystyrene containers during the restaurant lockdown would result in public outrage.

At this point the ordinance would automatically go into effect in April if no one stops it. The progressive left is running all around the county attempting get either one of the cities or the Special District Association to replace one of the Board reps who voted to bring the issue back for possible recision.

The County Board majority has floated the idea of withdrawing from the IWMA if it does not drop the ban. Everyone is sick of this agency conjuring up bans, posturing about global warming, and other ideological politicking instead of efficiently running landfills and recycling.

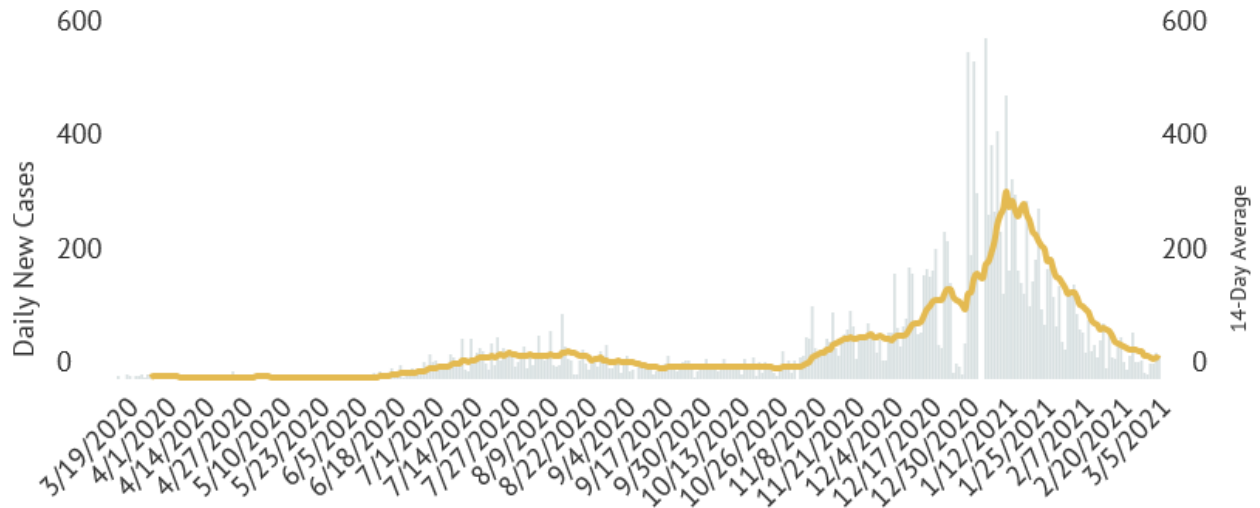
CURRENT ISSUES

Even though there is no Board of Supervisors Meeting, various issues continue to be tracked.

¹ In IWMA jurisdiction the green bin is for: *The following green waste items should be put in your curbside green waste container: leaves, food scraps, vegetable trimmings, grass clippings, brush, berry vines, prunings (maximum of 3-feet long and 6-inches in diameter), and cut-up tree trunks and trimmings.*

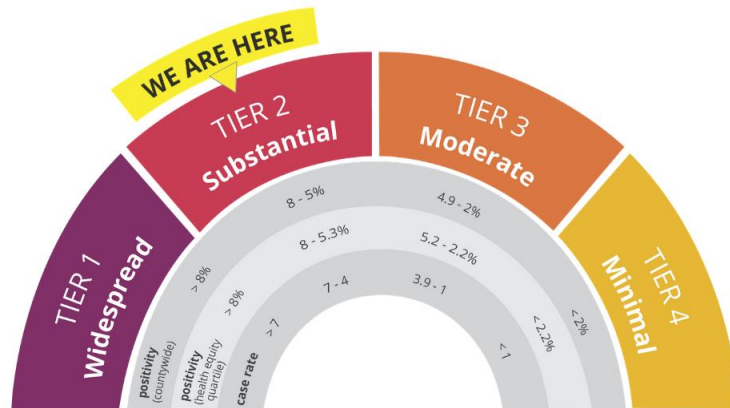
Item 1 - COVID Status. At the end of last week the County moved from the most severe widespread purple lockdown tier to the substantial red tier. This tier allows reduced occupancy indoor dining, theater attendance, and similar openings. Hopefully the trend will continue and new variants will not reverse the positive trends. Other states such as Texas and Florida have ended most restrictions already and do not seem to have suffered disproportionately.

Daily New Cases (and 14-Day Average).



13 (5 ICU)**

SLO County Residents with COVID-19 in Hospital

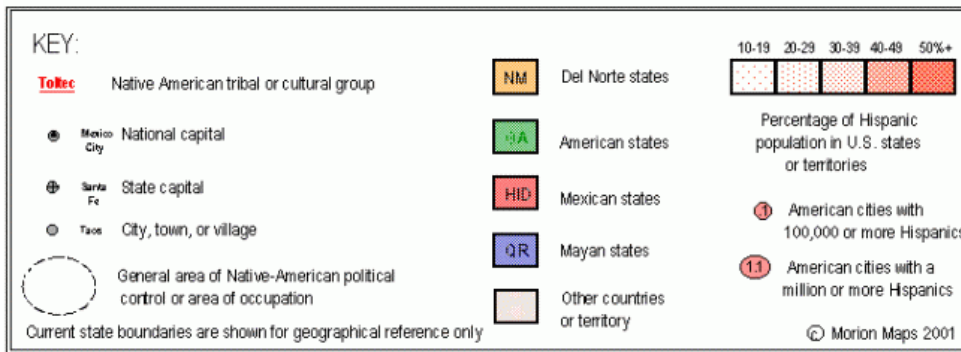


Item 2 - Early Warning: Coastal Commission Meeting on Thursday, March 18, 2021 to shut down off-road riding and prohibit street permitted vehicles on Oceano the dunes and on the beach. See the 181-page indictment against the current uses of the Park. We will present more information in next week’s Update. For whatever reason, neither the Board of Supervisors nor the primary impacted cities seem to be organizing any opposition. The correspondence file is huge and contains thousands of pages, including an overwhelming number of communications supporting the closure.

<https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2021/3/special-hearing/Th3-3-2021-report.pdf>

Item 3 - Border Collapsing. On several days this week, U.S. agents took more than 4,000 migrants into custody, nearly double the number in January. Roughly 350 teens and children have been crossing the U.S. border without their parents each day in recent weeks, four times as many as last fall, and many are stuck for days in our detention cells waiting for shelter openings. While most adult migrants are turned away, unaccompanied minors are allowed to stay, as are some families with young children.

República Del Norte circa 2080 A.D.



Item 4 - Federal Elections (and practically all elections) Nationalized and Vandalized. The House passed the National Voting Rights Act, (*HR 1) and sent it to the Senate. The Democratic Party

sponsors of the bill characterize it as a mechanism to make it easier for minorities, disabled, and other groups which “under-vote” to participate. The Bill nationalizes Federal elections and removes control from the state legislatures and county election officials. This is a massive and historic centralization of power for whoever controls the Congress and Presidency.

The safest way to conduct fair elections is for the voter to have been preregistered, show up at a neighbored polling place, prove his or her identity with a valid ID, sign in, and vote in private. The only exceptions should be for disabled people, frail elderly, and military on active duty.

Voting is one of the most important duties of citizenship and should be regarded as such. Fobbing off on a mail ballot cheapens the experience. Getting up early on a crisp cold November New England morning , stopping by the poll at an 18th century historic church, voting, greeting one’s neighbors, and then heading for work past the minuteman statue in the village square is the heritage civic exercise. To the extent possible, this should be provided in the context of every climate, urban, and suburban place, and should be regarded as a proud civic duty. People should be encouraged to celebrate this right, veterans should wear their ribbons, and the “I Voted” pins should be more substantial and upgraded (metal) with the election year displayed. People could accumulate these over their lives and wear them all proudly each successive election day.

You can’t mail in your jury duty; you can’t mail in your military service; you can’t mail in your wedding; you can’t mail in your driver’s test; you can’t mail in your COVID shot (and without filling out a battery of forms); and you can’t board an airplane without a special license ID.

While these provisions pertain to Federal elections, it will be impractical for the counties not to include them in all elections due to the structural and processing requirements.

The Bill has been approved in the House and is pending in the Senate. Senate Republicans have sworn that it will not pass. Democrats may have to seek cloture on a Republican filibuster. This would require that they obtain 10 Republican votes. This should be called the National Vote Harvesting, Voter Subversion, and Single Party Rule Act.

Some of the “highlights” of the proposed law include:

- *Amend the [NVRA](#) to treat public universities as “voter registration agencies,” which would obligate them to facilitate voter registration in connection to providing other services (as is currently the case for state DMVs and public assistance agencies);*
- *Express a sense of Congress that students should be allowed to vote in the jurisdiction where they are attending school;*
- *This part would require states to use Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) for federal elections nationwide. Under AVR, when eligible citizens provide information to government agencies like the Department of Motor Vehicles, they are automatically registered to vote (or have their existing registration information updated) unless they affirmatively decline.*

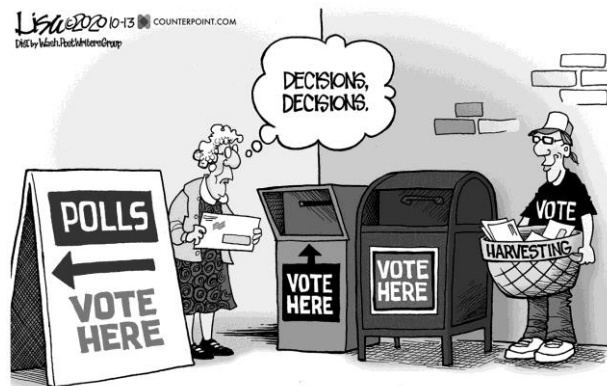
- *This part would require states to offer same day registration (SDR) for federal elections. Traditionally, eligible voters have been required to register in advance of an election in order to cast a ballot. In many states, the voter registration deadline falls more than four weeks before a given election. SDR allows eligible residents to register to vote and cast a ballot on the same day .*
- *This subtitle would require that the Census Bureau record incarcerated persons as living in their pre-incarceration communities rather than at the prison facilities where they are serving their sentences. The Census Bureau's [current practice](#) is to count incarcerated people as living in the communities where they are incarcerated, which entitles those communities to a larger share of legislative seats and government resources. But [most](#) incarcerated people have little or no connection to the communities where they are incarcerated, and typically return to their home communities upon release.*

Note: Neither do university students who are passing through for 2 or 4 years.

- *This subtitle would direct the Bureau to count incarcerated people at their last address prior to imprisonment.*
- *Require states with voter identification requirements to permit voters who lack i.d. to vote if they complete a sworn written statement attesting to their identity (unless the individual is a first-time voter who registered by mail).*
- *Require states to provide secure, accessible drop-boxes for completed absentee ballots in federal elections, starting at least 45 days before an election; and*
- *Prohibit states from restricting curbside voting;*
- *Require every provisional ballot to be counted with respect to the contests in which the voter who cast it was eligible to vote (so, for example, a voter who cast their ballot in a precinct where they were ineligible to vote in local contests would still have their vote for statewide office counted);*
- *This subtitle would make findings in support of statehood for the District of Columbia. It notes, among other things, that District residents have always carried out all the obligations of citizenship, but without congressional voting rights or self-determination in purely local matters. Moreover, the District is larger in terms of population than two other states, pays more per capita in taxes than any state, and is in one of the strongest fiscal positions of any U.S. jurisdiction. The subtitle would affirm the authority of Congress under Article IV of the U.S. Constitution to create a new state out of the area that currently comprises the District, while maintaining the federal seat of government in the areas comprising the Capitol complex, the White House, the National Mall, and other federal buildings and grounds.*
- *Require states to allow at least two weeks of early voting for federal elections (including weekends), for a period of at least ten hours per day, including some early morning and evening hours;*

- *Require states to ensure, to the greatest extent practicable, that early voting locations are within walking distance of public transportation, and are also accessible to rural voters; and*
- *Require states to begin processing and scanning ballots cast during early voting for tabulation at least two weeks before the date of the election.*
- *Require states to allow any eligible voter to vote by mail in federal elections;*
- *Require states to allow voters to request mail-in ballots online or by phone;*
- *Prohibit states from requiring voters casting a ballot by mail to provide identification aside from a signature, and require signature discrepancy issues to be resolved by at least two trained election officials;*
- *Require states to make a good faith effort to notify voters of apparent signature discrepancies and provide an opportunity to cure any issues within ten days;*
- *Prohibit notarization or witness signatures requirements for mail-in ballots in federal elections;*
- *Require mail-in ballots and ballot applications to be accessible for voters with disabilities;*
- *Require states to send a mail-in ballot to any voter who requests one at least five business days prior to Election Day, and to accept any mail-in ballot postmarked on or before Election Day if it arrives within ten days after the election;*
- *Require states to allow voters to return mail-in ballots to designated drop-off locations or to a polling place during early voting or on election day;*
- *Require states to permit voters to designate someone else to return their completed and sealed mail-in ballot, as long as the person is not being compensated, and prohibit limits on the number of ballots any designated person can return;*
- *Require states to begin processing mail-in ballots at least 14 days prior to an election;*
- *Require states to establish tracking programs for mail ballots and provide information on whether an individual's vote was counted and, if not, why not; and*
- *Require prepaid return envelopes for mail-in ballots and ballot applications.*

If this is actually enacted into law and then combined with the open borders policy outlined in **Item 3** above, the enviro-socialist-racist dictatorship can be imposed in a few election cycles.



LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Item 2 - Request to approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with various partners regarding decommissioning options and reuse opportunities at Diablo Canyon Power Plant's Parcel P. The Board voted unanimously to approve a Resolution to join a new a new group to explore the potential of the future economic use of Parcel P (the developed area of the plant) as Diablo is decommissioned. PG&E pointed out that even though it owns the property and the plant, it had not been included in the group. Ultimately any decisions about the future must recognize PG&E's rights.

A Last-Minute Glitch: A more controversial issue involved the wording of the Resolution, which apparently originally included the San Luis Obispo County Planning and Development Director as the County representative.

It was pointed out that the County Planning Department would be the agency processing PG&E's decommissioning permit application and EIR to demolish the plant. This will be the largest permit and EIR in the history of the County. Because of the potential conflict of interest, the County was removed as representative. Its role will be to support positive legislation.

Background: The group includes the Congressman, 24th District, United States; Senator, 17th District, California; Assemblyman, 35th District, California, **the County of San Luis Obispo**; the Board of Trustees of the California State University by its campus at California Polytechnic State University, California; REACH; The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, hereafter "LCSLO"; Tri-Counties Building & Construction Trades Council AFLCIO; the yet Northern Chumash Nonprofit; hereinafter referred to collectively as "the Participants." The purpose **is for voluntary cooperation in pursuing a unified vision for the decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant (DCPP) and future uses at the industrial site, "Parcel P."**

Rather than letting the enviro-socialists run rampant and turn the whole place into a nature preserve, which you can only visit on certain days accompanied by docent, why not have a viable economic use?

It's too bad that this level of effort has not and will not be put into attempting to preserve the plant. As we have pointed out repeatedly, the plant forestalls the generation of nearly 8 million metric tonnes of CO₂ each year. PG&E was driven to close the plant by the State's so-called green energy policies. The fact that they are now unravelling seems to be ignored.

As California and San Luis Obispo County allow the plant to close, the rest of the world is seeking ways to expand nuclear energy per the article below.

BUILD BACK NUCLEAR **BY REP. FRENCH HILL (R-ARK.)**

With the U.S. rejoining the Paris Agreement last Friday, it's puzzling to see what President Biden has actually announced he'll do to meet its goals. Mr. Biden seems to believe that adding boxes to a bureaucratic org chart and mingling with foreign officials at conferences may avert an environmental

crisis: an [executive order](#) from his first week in office creates a White House envoy, a new Climate Policy Office, an international photo op branded as the Leaders' Climate Summit, and a heap of "draft action plans" for a government task force to review. This month also brought news that the Biden Treasury Department would set up a "climate hub" among its ranks. Draft actions plans don't write themselves, after all.

But hidden in this strategy, such as it is, lies one idea of consequence, and that is the president's goal to finance lower emissions in developing countries through organizations like the World Bank. While the Bank already seeks to do this, its hands have been tied in an area where it could make an enormous difference: nuclear energy. For the president's climate plan to be serious, it should prioritize nuclear support through the Bank and the other multilateral lenders where the U.S. is a top shareholder.

While rich countries' carbon output is largely flat, the developing world's emissions are only projected to [grow unchecked](#). The U.S. and Europe, responsible for nearly all emissions at the turn of the 20th century, now only account for [one third](#). Wealthy nations may be the loudest voices in climate activism, but the future will be decided elsewhere, and it won't be an especially prosperous one if we insist that poorer societies power their way up the income scale with renewables alone. Nuclear will be essential for their energy mix.

Although its reputation in the United States suffers from memories of Three Mile Island, a 1979 accident as haunting as the bell bottoms of that era (but just as [harmless](#) to human life), nuclear energy is a mainstream power source providing [30 percent](#) of the world's low-carbon electricity. The main risks connected with nuclear arise when retreating from it, not embracing it. For instance, after a 2011 tsunami hit Japan's Fukushima reactor, leading the country to temporarily take its nuclear power plants offline, fossil fuel usage and electricity prices surged, resulting in [more deaths](#) for the country than from the disaster itself. Researchers have shown that Germany overreacted to Fukushima too, shutting down some of its reactors and incurring [\\$12 billion](#) in social costs each year, mostly through increased mortality from higher levels of air pollution.

Not only does nuclear energy release no carbon emissions, innovations continue to minimize the waste it leaves behind. [One recent breakthrough at the Argonne National Laboratory may permit up to 97 percent recycling of spent nuclear fuel.](#) Other advances continue to strengthen power plants' safety, and in the case of [modular reactors](#), they permit both smaller physical footprints and use with different energy sources.

Despite producing safe power with more reliability than solar or wind, nuclear [hasn't benefitted](#) from the same subsidies, and its financing is more complex since projects require massive upfront costs. This is why government-backed agencies are often called in to guarantee loans when building abroad. With Beijing and Moscow [eyeing](#) nuclear energy deals in South Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and even Latin America, it makes no sense for the U.S. to stay on the sidelines. For this very reason, Congress in 2019 [eased restrictions](#) at the Export-Import Bank when competing for nuclear deals against Chinese suppliers.

Yet the World Bank and its sister institutions across the globe can do even more. Not only is the Bank's lending more transparent than China's, it has the balance sheet and experience in developing countries to make an impact. It could also finance safer reactors based on U.S. and Japanese technologies.

Though the World Bank left nuclear finance decades ago, its own anti-poverty mission makes its return a no-brainer. The governments that act as the Bank's shareholders have already compelled it to quit upstream oil and gas projects in the developing world, even as the Bank pursues a goal of universal access to electricity. This makes little sense. If the World Bank has to surrender its expertise in fossil fuel lending, surely it can restore its know-how in nuclear finance.

Breaking ground on new infrastructure is better than endless handwringing. Years of climate talks have emitted pledges to coordinate the vaguest of environmental efforts; the Paris Agreement itself attempts to "enable opportunities for coordination," whatever that means.

These discussions are becoming nothing more than mileage runs for the frequent flyers who attend them, not progress reports on the building spree that the world will need to thrive with ample clean energy. It's time to go nuclear or go home.

Congressman French Hill is a Republican representing the 2nd District of Arkansas. He is a member of the House Financial Services Committee, which oversees U.S. policy at the World Bank and other international financial institutions. This article first appeared in numerous publications on March 1, 2021.

Item 3 - Resolution Approved : COVID Rent Relief.

a. Authorizing County participation in the State of California Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) and directing 98.5% of its Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) allocation, in the amount of \$8,291,121, through the State program to serve County residents and

b. Authorizing the County Administrative Officer to sign an agreement with the Department of Housing and Community Development, and any amendments thereto, the amount not to exceeded \$17,589,967 for the purpose of rental assistance program administration. The Board approved the authorizations unanimously.

Background: The County received an allocation of \$8.3 million in January and will receive another \$9.2 million at some point. The County has opted to have the State Department of Housing and Community Development operate the program on its behalf. The details are not too clear from the write-up.

The funding will be used to cover rent delinquencies for residents who meet certain income requirements. They will basically be eligible for 80% of the rent in arrears if their landlord agrees to forgive 20%. It is not clear from the write-up how many units may be included or what the accumulating arrears are or may become. It is also not clear how long program will last.

One significant problem will occur when the program ends and it is time for people to begin paying the full rent. Once people have become used to this assistance, they may fall into arrears again. Many may have lost their jobs permanently, as long-term impacts of the COVID lockdown manifest themselves.

In the big picture COVID has been used by the left to expand the welfare state and the role of socialism. The money is part of the trillions of dollars of Federal COVID aid which is funded by debt.

In the end, when interest rates rise, the cost of repaying the debt will escalate and savage the Federal Budget. Massive tax increases will be necessary.

The California Globe article below focused on the big picture in California. Note that increasing utility bill delinquency was already a problem before COVID.

Millions Of Californians' Unpaid Utility Bills Total \$1.25 Billion Due To Lockdown

'Every billion in spending translates into a 7% rate increase to the ratepayer'

BY KATY GRIMES

While 3.3 million Californians have unpaid utility bills totaling \$1.25 billion due to “COVID pandemic impacts,” the California Public Utilities Commission at a meeting last week discussed their recent white paper exposing that since 2013, private utility bills have exceeded the annual inflation rate of 1.9%. In just the last seven years, San Diego gas and Electric’s utility rates increased 48%, Pacific Gas and Electric’s increased 38% and Southern California Edison’s increased 6%.

The Globe met with Jesus Arredondo, energy and regulatory expert, and the Principal of Advantage Consulting. He said the CPUC hosted an Energy Rates and Costs En Banc (in full court) last week that centered around themes and concepts raised in their White Paper, [Utility Costs and Affordability of the Grid of the Future – California electric and gas cost and rate trends over the next decade.](#))

“The [white paper](#) warns that the burden of continually rising utility bills will likely derail California’s decarbonization work if left unaddressed,” Arredondo said. “Worse, the rising costs are hitting customers who’ve been hit hard by pandemic-driven job losses and sheltering at home the hardest.”

California’s “decarbonization work” is the state’s and CPUC’s flawed scheme to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through moving to an all-electric grid, away from oil and gas, coal, hydroelectric and nuclear power.

Arredondo said at the hearing, CPUC Deputy Executive Director Ed Randolph, said that the work to advance transportation electrification and all electric homes could result in “... energy unaffordability in parts of the state.”

Think about that: “energy unaffordability” is already hitting in many parts of the state.

“We are going to hit an inflection point where energy will be so expensive because the good-idea fairies tried to rescue the world with renewable energy,” Arredondo said. “Unfortunately, the take a ‘more tempered’ approach recommendations were ignored.”

Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee Chair, Assemblyman Chris Holden (D-Los Angeles), said the State must ensure its energy system is clean, safe, and affordable, but warned the idea that the “grid will be either reliable or clean is a false choice.” Holden called for creating a western-wide grid to lower utility bills and help decarbonize the system, Arredondo said. Two years ago, Holden introduced

legislation to create a regional grid but was unsuccessful. Opponents feared it would slow in-state renewable development and jobs, Arredondo said.

“While much of the focus at the daylong hearing was on the impacts of rates continuing to escalate over this decade, Mike Campbell with the Commission’s Public Advocates Office stressed that we are now in the midst of a rate crisis.”

With the [white paper](#) exposing private utility bills exceeding the annual inflation rate of 1.9% over the last seven years, with SDG&E’s rates increasing 48%, PG&E 38% and SCE 6%, just since 2013, there clearly is a rate crisis. Arredondo reported:

At the En Banc hearing, Severin Borenstein, UC Berkeley Professor of Business Administration and Public Policy and CAISO Board member said that what utilities charge for energy is “way above its costs.” Much of the rate increases, he said, are for fixed charges. He suggested instead of raising rates to impose a tax to cover private utilities growing costs, from transmission to wildfire reduction work. That tax, he said, should be higher on those with more income to help protect low-income customers. The latter lack rooftop solar and other technologies to reduce their energy use, resulting in them bearing a great share of the fixed costs because charges are based on the amount of power consumed from the grid.

Other proposed strategies pitched for lowering electricity rates and protecting low-income customers is to tap into the state general fund money to cover rising costs. Having utilities use ratepayer-backed bonds to cover their rising costs, as they are doing for wildfire capital costs and loss of income from the pandemic, however, is not seen as a solution.

Average annual bundled rates are expected to rise: PG&E 5.3%, SCE 0.8%, and SDG&E 6.8%.

Arredondo said the paper highlighted that the utilities’ costs of capital, which includes transmission and distribution investments and low-income subsidies, also continue to rise – a total of 38% between 2016 and 2021.

The rate of return and profit margins for the private utilities is more than 10% on their returns on their investments: Southern California Edison 10.3%, PG&E 10.25%, SDG&E 10.2%, and 10.05% for SoCalGas.

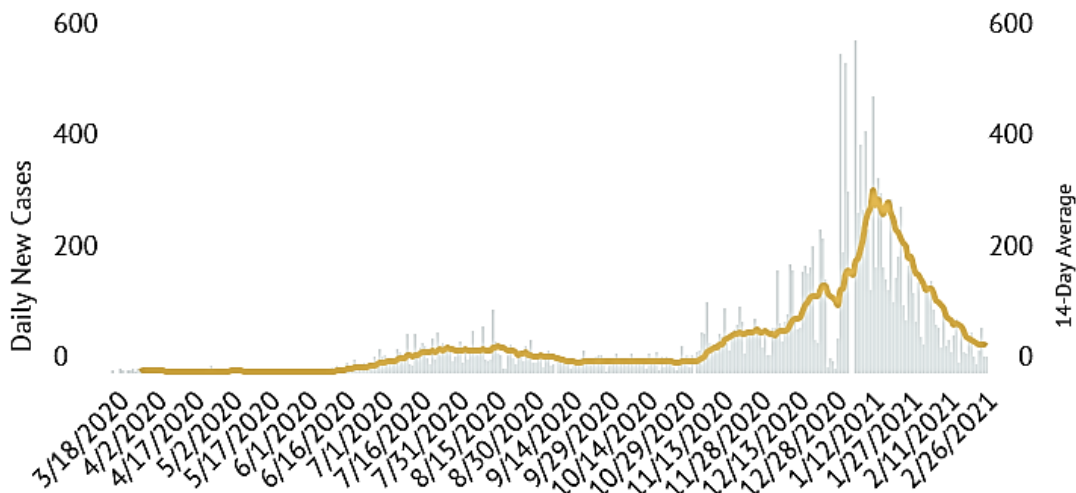
While the Legislature has passed several COVID relief bills, none of what they have proposed – government grant programs, tax amnesty, licensing and fee waivers, emergency relief for low-income students, and stimulus payments – addresses the ever-increasing utility bills, or how the \$1.25 billion in unpaid utility bills will be paid – or bailed out.

Arredondo noted, “the more regulations you impose on utilities, the higher rates go up. Every billion in spending translates into a 7% rate increase to the ratepayer.”

By [Katy Grimes](#), March 3, 2021 12:41 pm. This article first appeared in the March 3, 2021 California Globe. Katy Grimes, the Editor of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, and the co-author of [California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses?](#)

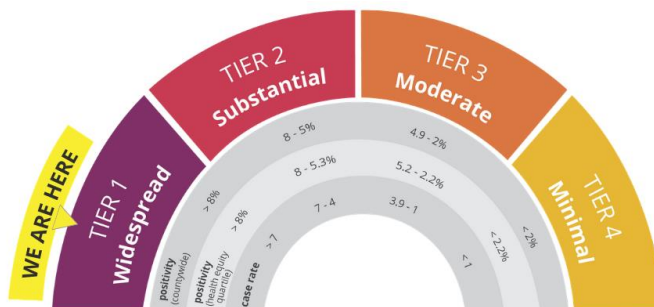
Item 32 - COVID Update. The Health Director provided a verbal update on the apparent decline of the disease. She warned, however, that masks and social distancing are still needed. The incidence of new cases and hospitalizations continued to decline. Nationally and at the State level, the progressive left is unhappy, as the COVID epidemic has provided one of the most unparalleled opportunities in American history to expand government programs and dependency. Even though the economy is bouncing back more vigorously than expected, their spirits have been dampened. Many economists are warning that the \$1.9 million COVID pork proposal is far more stimulus than is needed. Of course, it is all debt as well.

Daily New Cases (and 14-Day Average). Two weeks ago the county's new cases continued downward. As of this writing, the county was still in the purple regulatory tier.



29 (6 ICU)**

SLO County Residents with COVID-19 in Hospital



Item 35 - It is recommended that the Board receive and file a presentation regarding the Fiscal Year 2021-22 County and State budgets, and provide direction to staff as necessary. The Board received the report, which included the standard PowerPoint. Staff projects that a budget with no large service increases or initiatives will be presented in May. The only real increases will be negotiated salary costs, which the Departments are unable to absorb. These have been large in past years.

What was missing: It would have been better if this report had been presented after the submission of the 2nd Quarter financial report, which is likely to be reviewed during the March 16th meeting. This is

putting the cart before the horse to talk about next year without having the latest information for this year as context.

The Board can be lulled into complicity by repeated presentations. This in turn may dull their resolve to discover alternatives and problems. It should have asked for an analysis such as:

- **What would the service consequences be if we reduced the budget by 2%, 5% and 7 %?**
- **What are the property tax impacts of projects which will be approved this year for next year county wide?**
- **What is the lost time rate due to sickness, workers comp, and AWOL by division, department, and County wide? Note: Lost time is the failure of an employee to show up at his or her normal workstation as scheduled. Vacations, holidays, training, maternity leave, etc., are not counted as lost time as they are scheduled.**
- **How is the COVID money being used to offset regular costs? Are there any cliffs coming when the employees are switched back to the general fund or regular departmental revenues?**

During the session each Board member was very complimentary of the staff in general and especially those who work on the Budget. The Board praised them for working in such complex milieu. This may be OK and supportive of morale. However, even with a high performing professional apolitical staff, officials are not elected to be part of the team. They must guard against being co-opted by day-to-day social interactions and responses to their needs and complaints. Elected officials react positively to staff that fix their pothole, eliminate the code violation complaint, figure out how to fund their pet project, and otherwise make the system work for them.

This is fine to a point. But ultimately the elected county board of supervisors, city council, school board, and other such body must maintain its distance and autonomy. Bureaucracies have their own interests, professional/educational acculturation, some senior staffers have been mentors to others, some have facilitated promotions and raises, and some have been close social friends for decades. Board members attend social events at conferences with staffers. Some staffers may become confidants. The normal bonds of human interaction grow.

Ultimately, the elected members must keep their distance, be skeptical, think outside the box, and represent the larger public, which pays the salaries and benefits, debt, and regulatory burdens. They must test, question, and penetrate. Often, we see an elected official ask a question, and the staffer actually answers a different question or rambles on and on, which defuses the actual point. At this juncture it is time for some 100 mile per hour fast balls, not "Ok, thanks." If you want love, buy a retriever dog.



As we periodically remind everyone:

The Constitution and its derivative state and local laws recognize that on a practical level, government exists to insure freedom, safety of persons and property, legal stability, public order, and the general welfare in society. Its very distinctive character is that it recognizes that governments themselves have always been and always will be the greatest threat to those very purposes. Accordingly, the County would do well to adopt the statement below as its overarching purpose and organizational value, against which substantive policy and organizational values are measured:

PROTECT LIBERTY, PERSONAL SECURITY, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND FREEDOM WHILE PROMOTING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, STRONG FAMILIES, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The budget properly structured and vigilantly operated can be a powerful tool to implement this value.

In the meantime, we know that there is enough financial slush from the Feds and the State washing into the County to make this an easy year. The risk will be if all or part of the largess becomes built into the recurring expenditures. Moreover, it is likely that Congress will add several trillion dollars more in the next few months. Of this, \$350 million is slated for blue states and their cities, counties, and schools. The County will be awash in money in the near term.

The problem will occur in a future year, because the entire Federal largess is funded by pure debt. At some point interest rates will rise and the amount of interest on the debt will rise exponentially. The payments will savage the ability of the Feds to fund current services such as the military, education, housing, welfare, and its administrative operations.

Item 36 - County 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan and 1-Year Capital Budget. This was an important policy issue that did not receive much discussion. Again, the Board and especially Supervisor Gibson praised the staff but did not engage the issue of unfunded maintenance of existing and deteriorating infrastructure and facilities.

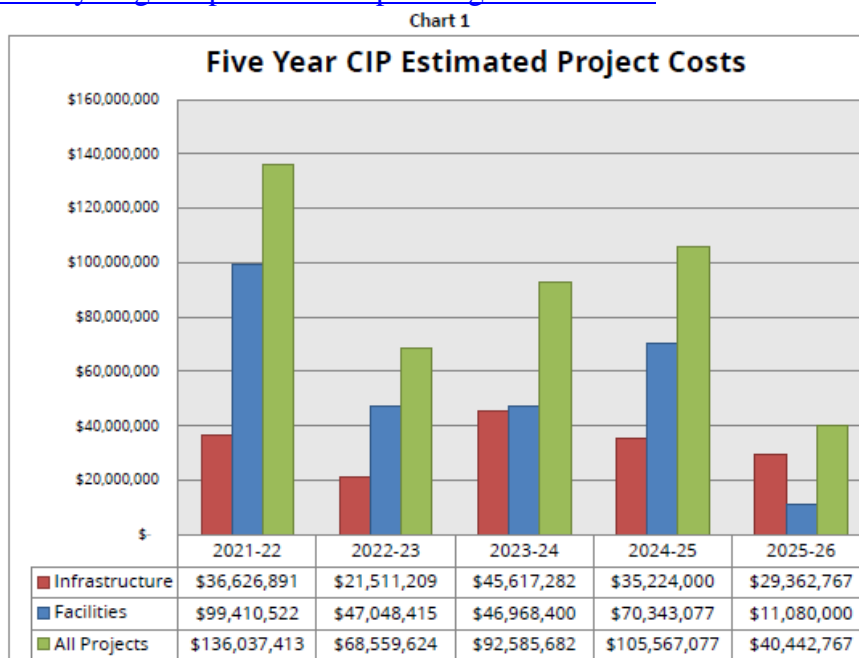
The County conceptually divides its capital plan into (1) infrastructure, which contains roads, bridges, storm water facilities, water and sewer, sidewalks and so forth, and (2) facilities that include public buildings, parks, golf courses, jails, parking lots, etc. The significant issue is, as the write-up below states, the staff and consultants have identified \$607 million of capital needs for which they can identify \$126 million of funding sources.

The projects in the Five Year CIP have a total estimated cost of \$607 million. Facilities projects comprise \$350 million of the total estimate while Infrastructure projects make up \$257 million. Of the infrastructure and facilities projects, \$126 million has been allocated in previous years from a variety of sources, leaving a remaining unallocated budget of \$481 million

It is not clear from the write-up what portion of the \$481 million “unallocated” is funded or likely to be funded in the future. Does this presentation include only projects which are funded? If not, what are the unfunded needs?

This is, in fact, one of the most fundamental purposes of the CIP. While the County presents a balanced annual operating budget, what would it actually need to stop the deterioration of roads, buildings, parks, stormwater facilities, and everything else? Once this number is known, then the new amounts needed going into the future could be projected.

<https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/file/getfile/130514>



Item 39 - Amendment of the State Water Supply Contract. The Board approved the contract amendment on a 3/2 vote with Supervisors Arnold and Peschong dissenting. See last week’s update for a more detailed review of the issue at the website:

http://www.colabslo.org/prior_actions/2021/Weekly%20Update%20Feb-28_Mar-6_2021.pdf

The amendment (Amendment 18) to the County’s supply contract with the California State Department of Water Resources (DWR) will allow the County and its subcontractor water purveyors to recoup revenue from the sale of unused water to other DWR contractors up and down the state. Significantly, the staff report included no downsides or risk analyses.

Some of the Supervisors and water purveying agencies (who are subcontractors) are salivating over the provisions of the contract amendment, which will for the first time allow the County and the agencies to sell and exchange stored water for up to ten years, which they “do not need.”

The contract allows sale of “excess water” to other state water contractors rather than simply have it go down the State Water Project canal to benefit others. (This is termed as spilling.) The tables below illustrate the staff policy recommendation:

Greater Ability to Move Water Prior to Spills

Year	Annual Allocation %	Stored Water Lost to San Luis Reservoir Spill (AF)	Water Lost Due to Storage Limits (AF)	Total Water Lost to Spill or Storage Limits (AF)
2007	60	12,500	None	12,500
2010	50	No Spill	2,201	2,201
2011	80	6,009	4,160	10,169
2012	65	No Spill	3,139	3,139
2017	85	15,267	6,487	21,754
2019	85	18,639	3,719	22,358
TOTAL		52,415	19,706	72,121

Year	Annual Allocation %	Total Water Available and Not Delivered (AF)	Unused Water (AF)	Water Lost to Spill (AF)	Total Unused Water and Water Lost to Spill (AF)	Estimated Average Annual Cost for Right to Water (\$/AF)	Estimated Value of Lost Asset & Potential Cost Recovery (\$)
2007	60	10,170	0	12,500	12,500	\$75	\$937,500
2010	50	7,670	2,201	No Spill	2,201	\$75	\$165,075
2011	80	15,170	4,160	6,009	10,169	\$75	\$762,675
2012	65	11,420	3,139	No Spill	3,139	\$100	\$313,900
2017	85	16,420	6,487	15,267	21,754	\$125	\$2,719,250
2019	85	16,420	3,719	18,639	22,358	\$125	\$2,794,750
TOTAL	62%	246,410	19,706	52,415	72,121		\$7,693,150

There was and is substantial opposition to adoption of this amendment in the north county. Basin overlayers are fearful that banking of state water in the Paso Basin could rearrange primary water rights. When questioned on this point during deliberations, County Counsel stated that a party that did inject state water into the aquifer would have the preminent right to that water. How this would impact the current primary rights of overlayers is unclear.

This and many other issues must now be examined, and management systems must be developed to ensure the primary rights of the resident overlayers.

Love in the Afternoon – Zoom Style

There were 2 items scheduled in the afternoon session. One involved an appeal by a winery owner of event restrictions at his winery in the Edna area. The other involved an appeal by some neighbors of a recently approved winery west of Paso Robles.

During public comment on one of the items, a couple called in and provided an X-rated audio play with highly sexual content. No doubt it was all the Board and staff could do to keep from laughing themselves out of their seats. More fun than zoning appeals. The audio tape should be out next week.



**San Luis Obispo County Council of Governments Meeting of Wednesday, March 3, 2021
(Cancelled)**

Perhaps there were no major policy issues. Some of the recent meetings have been primarily status reports on various intergovernmental financing programs and the status of selected projects.

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**

SoCal DESALINATION PLANT INCHES TOWARDS APPROVAL BY EDWARD RING

In a rare and commendable display of political courage and common sense, California Governor Gavin Newsom has been working to finally grant permits to construct a second major seawater desalination plant on the Southern California Coast.

But don't count on this new water source just yet. Despite clearing major hurdles, self-described environmentalists and their allies in the media haven't surrendered.

The *Los Angeles Times* is doing everything it can to derail the project. In a [February 26 article](#), the Times reports that "environmentalists" have serious concerns about the [proposed plant](#), set to be constructed in Huntington Beach and using a design similar to one already successfully operating about 60 miles south in Carlsbad. There's just one thing: in a supposedly objective look at the Huntington Beach plant, the only sources quoted are self-declared environmentalists opposed to the plant.

Here are some of the problems those purported environmentalists have with the [proposed desalination plant](#) in Huntington Beach. Quoting from the LA Times article:

"Though the Huntington Beach facility meets the state goal of diversifying California's water supply, it would undermine other environmental policies. The plant would require large amounts of electricity; it would sit next to a rising sea; and it would continue the use of huge ocean intakes harmful to microscopic marine life."

These objections are easily answered.

First, the construction of anything in California, though approved by one agency, will be opposed to multiple others. This is the dystopian nature of California's self-contradictory and destructive regulatory environment.

Second, every drop of water that is produced by the plant is water that does not have to be transported from reservoirs in Northern California, at an energy cost that rivals that of desalination. Third, even the most aggressive projections of sea-level rise would not affect operations of the Huntington Beach plant, and even if some adaptations eventually were necessary they would be part of a larger project to protect the Southern California coast.

Fourth, as for "intakes harmful to microscopic marine life," the design of these intakes prevents any significant wildlife impact. The intake filters are huge, which disperses the negative pressure over a very large surface area, and the pressure is periodically reversed, freeing the filter surfaces of microorganisms.

EVERYTHING'S A TRADE-OFF

Concerns about desalination along with the responses could occupy volumes, and have. But the notion that there is any sort of consensus among environmentalists that seawater desalination is a bad choice is false. Every option to supply the resources required to sustain urban civilization is fraught with tradeoffs. With Californians possibly facing yet another drought, desalination offers a way to take pressure off countless stressed upstream ecosystems.

Economic arguments offer a more credible case against desalination, but can fail to acknowledge the variability of the market price for water. In drought years, municipal water purchasers and farmers with perennial crops have paid well over the price for desalinated fresh water, which for San Diego's Carlsbad plant comes in at around \$2,000 per acre foot. To be sure, this price is well in excess of the wholesale price for water in wet years, which can drop well under \$500 per acre foot. But for an urban area such as Los Angeles, situated on an arid desert located 500 miles or more from its sources of water, adding the expensive but certain option of desalinated water to a portfolio of water procurements is a prudent bet.

Water supply resiliency is not merely dependent on weather. Even if a Sierra snowpack reliably forms winter after winter for the next several decades, residents of the Los Angeles Basin still depend on three aging canals, precarious ribbons that each stretch for hundreds of miles. Earthquakes, terrorism, or other disasters could shut them down indefinitely. In an average year, Southern California water districts import 2.6 million acre feet of water. The 701-mile long [California Aqueduct](#), mainly conveying water from the Sacramento River, contributes a little more than half of that, at 1.4-million-acre feet. The 242-mile long [Colorado River Aqueduct](#) adds another one million acre feet. Finally, the Owens River on the eastern Sierras contributes 250,000 acre feet via the 419-mile long [Los Angeles Aqueduct](#).

In a recent book "[Winning the Water Wars](#)," author Steven Greenhut concludes the solution to California's water challenges is to pursue an all-of-the-above strategy that embraces abundance, or as he puts it "feeding more water into the plumbing."

“In addition to building more surface and groundwater storage facilities,” Greenhut writes, “California can deal with its water problems by building ocean desalination plants and increasing its commitment to wastewater reuse and other innovations.” If Greenhut, who talked with countless experts while researching his book, and who is a confirmed libertarian, can support the economics of public and private investment in desalination, anyone can.

A series of California Policy Center reports in 2018 expand on the concept of water abundance. [Part two of the report](#), “How to Make California’s Southland Water Independent for \$30 Billion,” surveys existing investments in desalination and wastewater reuse and comes up with the following capital budget:

- \$7.5 billion to build the treatment plants to annually recover and perpetually reuse the one million acre feet of wastewater that currently is still treated and released into the Pacific Ocean.
- Another \$15 billion to build desalination plants with a combined capacity of another one million acre feet per year.
- And \$7.5 billion to upgrade and optimize the capacity to capture runoff, mitigate the capacious aquifers beneath the City of Los Angeles, and use them all for water storage.

This is the sort of water project that should be animating California’s politicians. There are 5.1 million households in the three counties that would benefit from this scheme – Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside. A \$30 billion capital improvement bond would cost each household \$384 per year. If revenue bonds were to pass half the cost to ratepayers – a reasonable burden that would bring even desalinated water down to an affordable consumer price – the general obligation bonds would add new taxes of just \$192 to each household. Debt like this is referred to as “good debt,” unlike the \$100 billion or so in debt that would be necessary to complete a nearly useless, obsolete before it’s even done, make-work project like the bullet train, or the bonds now being floated to fund government employment retirements.

Along with thinking big on the policy of water abundance, Gavin Newsom should take steps to keep the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant open. That would solve the energy challenge associated with desalination overnight. [Diablo Canyon](#), situated on a mere 12 acres, produces 1.8 gigawatts of continuous, clean electric power. Based on the [Carlsbad desalination plant’s performance](#), the energy input required to produce one million acre feet of desalinated seawater per year is only 560 megawatts – less than one-third of Diablo Canyon’s output.

THE SIERRA CLUB HATES PEOPLE The biggest impediment to Californians achieving water abundance, along with energy abundance and abundant, affordable housing, are pressure groups that claim to speak for everyone who cares about the environment. For decades, these groups have tied in knots all infrastructure development and housing development in California. None are worse than the Sierra Club which, of course, bitterly [opposes the proposed Huntington Beach](#) desalination plant.

A prime example of the Sierra Club's damage to California: the group's intense opposition to Prop. 3, the 2018 [state water bond](#). Losing by less than one percent, Prop. 3 would have done amazing things for California. It was a hard-won compromise between many environmental groups, farmers, and urban water agencies. It would have allocated \$9 billion in new funds, roughly half and half between water infrastructure projects including new runoff capture and storage, and environmental mitigation. Absolutely wondrous mitigation opportunities were lost when that bond failed, including reviving the Salton Sea and turning the Los Angeles River back into a river. Right now, the Los Angeles "river" is a cliché, a gigantic concrete channel, slick as a runway, known to American movie buffs as an obligatory leg on every car chase that takes place in downtown Los Angeles. Imagine this river if it were restored, with parks, trees, bike paths, trails and wildlife habitat, winding through the heart of a great city.

It wouldn't have taken much for this bond to pass, but the Sierra Club objected to funds from the bond being allocated to repair the Friant-Kern canal. Their arguments were based mostly on a belief that the cost of those repairs should have been borne exclusively by South San Joaquin Valley farmers who use water from the canal.

The Sierra Club is well known for ruining otherwise viable compromises. For years, forestry experts have understood that the combination of fire suppression, reduced logging, and restrictions on controlled burns were leaving California's forests dangerously overgrown. Dying trees and cataclysmic fires are the result of this neglect, and hence the conflagrations we've seen in recent years would have happened [with or without climate change](#). But for decades, the Sierra Club has relentlessly opposed a return to [sensible forest management](#). Don't believe it? Ask Senator Dianne Feinstein.

"Sen. Feinstein blames Sierra Club for blocking wildfire bill," reads the provocative headline on [a 2002 story](#) in California's *Napa Valley Register*. Feinstein had brokered a congressional consensus on legislation to thin "overstocked" forests close to homes and communities, but could not overcome the environmental lobby's disagreement over expediting the permit process to thin forests everywhere else.

"Sen. Dianne Feinstein blames environmental ally the Sierra Club for Congress' failure to pass legislation last month to thin national forests to reduce wildfire threats in the West," the paper reported. Feinstein herself told the paper, "The Sierra Club roasted me."

The bargains required to rescue California depend on extremist groups like the Sierra Club either backing off or being exposed and discredited. [Over five million acre feet more water per year](#) can be achieved through a combination of desalination, total wastewater reuse, and increased storage including building the Sites Reservoir and raising the height of the Shasta Dam. Why would sincere environmentalists oppose having another five million acre feet of water that could be left in the rivers? Why would they object to the entire Southland becoming water independent? Why wouldn't they be thrilled by the options this water abundance would enable, such as restoring wetlands and riparian habitats up and down the state? Is this about the environment, or about money and power?

Meanwhile, the “environmentalists” who have turned California into a state of expensive scarcity get plenty of help from the media. [The Los Angeles Times attempt hit piece on the Huntington Beach plant](#) came out on February 26, only days after the plant [got crucial approvals](#). And what was the thrust of this article? Reminding readers that one of the guests at Newsom’s infamous “French Laundry” dinner was a lobbyist for Poseidon, the company trying to build the desalination plant in Huntington Beach. Guilt by association. The article goes on to quote anonymous “critics” who complain that “Newsom and his political appointees are exerting heavy influence to benefit a private company that would produce some of the state’s most expensive supplies.”

Piling it on, the author writes “In addition, Newsom took the unusual step of replacing a Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board member who was highly critical of the project.” A fairer reporter might have observed that Gov. Newsom is doing something right.

If you can wade through the hackery of the Times article, there is of course this gem – the unintended but clear and grim assessment of how many hoops remain before there will be even one more desalination plant on the California Coast. There ought to be 20 operating by now. If and when the rain fails for more than a few years in a row, Californians will need to be reminded that the culprit was not climate change, but groups like the Sierra Club and newspapers like the Los Angeles Times that left us so thirsty. *Ed Ring is a cofounder of the California Policy Center, and a contributor to the California Globe where a version of this article first appeared on March 3, 2021,*



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