COLAB San Luis Obispo County

The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
JULY 10 - 16, 2022

THIS WEEK

BOS

SHOULD THE BOARD LOOSEN CONTROL OVER GRANTS?

SPECIAL RAISES FOR EXECS, MANAGERS, AND PROFESSIONALS BACK ON CONSENT CALENDAR

STATE WATER CONTRACT EXTENSION TO 2085 & CERTIFICATION BY BOARD OF A STATE EIR – BEGS LIABILITY QUESTIONS

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PLANNING COMMISSION

PREVIEW OF LARGE NIPOMO PROJECT
DRAFT EIR BAD NEWS FOR HOUSING
CHAPARRAL MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE

IWMA

HOUSEKEEPING ISSUES – NO NEW POLICIES

COASTAL COMMISSION

9.4 % FEE INCREASES ACROSS THE BOARD

COMMISSION OBJECTED TO COUNTY'S ADU ORDINANCE DISPUTE WILL HOLD UP COASTAL ADUs FOR A YEAR

COMMISSION TO DETERMINE IF IT SHOULD INTERVENE IN THE CAMBRIA CHRISTMAS MARKET PERMIT EXTENSION

LAST WEEK

NO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

MOST OTHER AGENCIES QUIET

3CE SPECIAL MEETING TO APPROVE SOME REAL GREEN ENERGY

THE STATE HAS REQUIRED THEM TO PROCURE THERMAL & BIO-MASS

EMERGENT ISSUES

COVID REMAINS LOW

FINALLY, FINAL ELECTION RESULTS

WAR BEGINNING TO LEAK BEYOND UKRAINE

COLAB IN DEPTH

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NEWSOM HAS A PLAN TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON IN CALIFORNIA - USING FOSSIL FUEL

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HOW MUCH FOSSIL FUEL IS LEFT?

HUMANITY CAN ADAPT TO WHATEVER CLIMATE CHANGE MAY OCCUR—WITH SUFFICIENT PROSPERITY AND POLITICAL WILL

BY EDWARD RING

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, July, 12, 2022 (Scheduled)

Item 9 - Request to approve revisions to the County's Grants Administration Policy. This one may appear to be a bit of bureaucratic esoterica, but it does add to the ongoing friction about who is in charge – the elected Board or the professional management. In the past, some Board members and some citizens have expressed concern that Board-adopted policies are slow to be executed or are evaded entirely. This in turn has fueled a discussion about the role of management.

In this case the staff proposes to loosen the control that the Board exercises over the application for grants and other intergovernmental revenues. The Board letter states:

The policy has been reviewed minimally since 1991. Administrative staff have reviewed the policy and, along with County Department Heads, are proposed changes which will streamline the grant approval process. In the new version, the Board will continue to review and approve all grant applications, offers, contracts and amendments to grants prior to their submittal or acceptance with the following exceptions:

• Department Heads may approve and submit grant applications with no (in-kind or cash) General Fund match or obligation.
• Projects or programs approved by the Board of Supervisors with an explicit grant application exception granted at that time.
• Any pre-existing or future grant application exemption authorized by resolution.

The portion highlighted in yellow above should be considered carefully.

1. Although the clause highlighted in green below provides for CAO "review," it is not clear if the CAO can stop the submission or ultimate receipt of the funding. For example, what if one of the elected department heads says, " I don't report to you – take a hike."

2. Do the second and third bulleted items put many grants on automatic pilot forever, thereby removing Board oversight?

In addition to the above changes, the policy revisions include requirements that:

• The Board shall review and approve all grant applications that add new personnel.

• All grant applications and documents, prior to grant submission and/or Board approval, shall be reviewed by County Counsel and the Administrative Office.
• All grant applications with the potential to impact the workload of another department shall be coordinated prior to grant submittal. Proof of coordination shall be submitted to the Administrative Office.

The section highlighted in blue, above, is designed to provide the Board with the last word on grants that will add staffing. Actually, just about all grants and particularly larger ones, even if for construction or equipment (no direct personnel), will result in future current needs for personnel somewhere in the county. For example, they may impact purchasing, engineering, accounting, and other support services.

Large capital grants for new or expanded facilities (for example a park) will ultimately result in the need for future maintenance personnel, refuse collection, management supervision, life guards, rangers, and pension expansion that are not strictly part of the grant application.

Finally, the question arises about whether the Board has the authority to delegate its approval of grant applications and the receipt of funds. The State statute regarding the powers of County Supervisors states in part:

25214.2. (a) The board may accept any revenue, money, grants, goods, or services from any federal, state, regional, or local agency or from any person for any lawful purpose of the county service area.

On the contrary, it grants this power solely to the Board, not to other officials.

Item 17 - It is recommended that the Board adopt resolution approving wage and benefit changes for unrepresented employees, including certain benefit changes for the Board of Supervisors. This item was originally included in the Board agenda for June 21, 2021. It is still being presented on the consent calendar. Last time, it was suddenly withdrawn at the last minute by HR Director. A fire storm had erupted as the rank-and-file union employees reacted to a large adjustment on top of normal raises for selected executive, management, and professional employees such as attorneys, engineers, IT experts, accountants, appraisers, financial analysts, human resource analysts and others. People were incensed that the matter was presented on the consent calendar. They also objected to major raises for the County CAO, County Counsel, and various department heads who already receive salaries which can reach into the mid $200 thousands.

It has been speculated that the item was withdrawn because only 4 of the 5 Board members were present at the June 21st meeting, as Supervisor Peschong was out of town. The theory is that Supervisors Arnold and Compton might vote against the raises and that Supervisors Gibson and Ortiz-Legg would be voting for the raises. A tie would mean a motion to approve would fail. At this point, the staff might be assuming that Supervisor Peschong would vote to approve the raises. Otherwise, they might have held back to develop an alternative strategy.

Background: Most of the union workers in the County are receiving increases of 3%, 2.5%, and 2.5%, respectively, over 3 years. The higher-level management group is to receive the same raises. However, this item also provides that many (199 job classifications containing about 516 individuals) would also receive equity adjustments in addition. These are to range from 0% to as high as 15%, depending on the position class.

Is approval of the raises required by County Ordinance? Management, and perhaps the Board, may rely on an ordinance that was approved by the voters back in 1973, which has been interpreted by some to require such equity adjustments:

- ***2.48.180 - Prevailing wage.***

In fixing compensation to be paid to persons in the county's employ, the board of supervisors and every other authority authorized to fix salaries or wages, shall provide a percentage change in compensation at least equal to the percentage change in compensation for the same quality of service rendered to persons, governmental agencies, firms or corporations under similar employment.

Prevailing salaries or wages shall be determined by negotiations between the county's employer representatives and the recognized employee organization(s).

In case such prevailing salaries or wages cannot be agreed to by parties, the matter may be submitted to a mutually selected arbitrator who shall make advisory recommendations to the negotiation parties.

(Ord. 1260 § 4, 1973: amendment adopted by the voters 11/4/84)

This is one of the more stupid pieces of local legislation that we have ever seen in any jurisdiction in America.

If the Ordinance applies to the Executives and Managers, does it not apply to the rank and file? In fact, is not even clear if it pertains to non-union executives and managers, as the clause highlighted in yellow above seems to specify that it actually pertains to unionized employees and must be achieved through collective bargaining, not through an automatic pilot process.

However, another ordinance states:

The salary range for appointed department heads shall be determined as follows: The board of supervisors declares that because of the special relationship of trust and confidence between the board of supervisors and its appointed department heads, and because this relationship is inconsistent with arm's length negotiations, a specific formula for computing salary ranges is necessary when information is available. The board of supervisors interprets Section 2.48.180 to permit use of a formula for determination of prevailing wage for department heads. This interpretation shall not bind the board of supervisors or its representatives to use, or nonuse, of any formula of determination of prevailing wages for any other classes. Salary ranges for appointed department heads shall be set to maintain equitable internal relationships and shall, when information is available, be computed in accordance with the following formula:

This one raises additional questions: Did they intend that in the event that it is used for management, it pertains solely to department heads? Most of the positions that are to receive the equity adjustment are not department heads. The language is very peculiar, stating that "the Board of Supervisors interprets Section 2.48.180… ." Is the current Board of Supervisors bound by this language from decades ago with respect to their interpretation?

The Survey: In any case, the HR Director undertook a survey of "comparable jurisdictions" to ascertain how far various executive, managerial, and professional classes were behind in salary when matched with the other selected jurisdictions. This is called the Compensation Survey and is cited as the justification.

The table below is a sample illustration of how the methodology used by the County attempts to justify the special raises. A similar analysis was prepared for each position class. At least they didn't include the President of CAL Poly.

County Administrative Officer **BU09**

Survey Agency	Comparable Class	Range Max.
Cal Poly	No Comparable Class	
City of San Luis Obispo	City Manager	$23,138
El Dorado County	Chief Administrative Officer	$22,438
Fresno County	County Administrative Officer	$21,253
Kern County	County Administrative Officer	$18,323
Monterey County	Admin Officer	$27,557
Placer County	County Executive Officer	$25,526
San Luis Coastal USD	No Comparable Class	
Santa Barbara County	County Executive Officer	$25,678
Santa Cruz County	County Admin Officer	$26,877
Sonoma County	County Administrator	$25,993
State CA	No Comparable Class	
Ventura County	County Executive Officer	$27,963
Private Sector ERI	No Comparable Job	
San Luis Obispo County	County Administrative Officer	$22,152
	Median	**$25,602**
	% +/- Median	**-13.47%**
	% to Get to Median	**15.57%**

A Question of Tactics? Many of the positions included in the raise are technical professional positions. The public concern is focused on the CAO, County Counsel, and other top paid officials. Most of the proposed raises are for professionals such as lawyers, engineers, IT analysts, accountants, budgeteers, generalist managers, and others requiring special post graduate university training and various types of certification. The sample below is for Software Engineer III.

Software Engineer III **BU07**

Survey Agency	Comparable Class	Range Max.
Cal Poly	Analyst/Programmer	$10,792
City of San Luis Obispo	No Comparable Class	
El Dorado County	Senior IT Analyst	$9,058
Fresno County	Information Technology Analyst IV	$7,290
Kern County	Database Analyst II	$7,283
Monterey County	Software Engineer III	$10,931
Placer County	IT Analyst - Senior	$10,504
San Luis Coastal USD	No Comparable Class	
Santa Barbara County	EDP Systems & Programming Analyst II - restrict	$9,972
Santa Cruz County	IT App Dev/Support Analyst III	$10,554
Sonoma County	Systems Software Analyst	$10,331
State CA	No Comparable Class	
Ventura County	Data Systems Architect	$9,870
Private Sector ERI	Software Engineer	$10,006
San Luis Obispo County	Software Engineer III	$9,580
	Median	**$10,006**
	% +/- Median	**-4.26%**
	% to Get to Median	**4.45%**

By including the high-ranking executive officials, department heads, and high paid generalist administrators in the package, the Board generated the criticism. Had they carved these positions out and stuck with the professionals, they might have received less complaint. Reportedly, the various unions are very angry at the situation.

The Cost Doesn't Seem to be a Problem - Even though it's not Budgeted:

The increased costs associated with the wage, healthcare, and wellness and development program are estimated to increase County costs for the Fiscal Year 2022-23 by $5,199,000 and County ongoing costs by $9,796,000.

This week's write up adds to the June 21st version a paragraph in this regard which stating:

Departmental savings and/or unanticipated revenue will be the primary funding source for unbudgeted expenditures associated with the compensation increases. To the extent departmental savings are not available to cover the amount, staff will recommend that your Board authorize a transfer of the deficit amount out of General Fund contingencies to departments' operating budgets, as needed, as part of the third quarter report. The third quarter is when many such year-end adjustments are made,

Does this mean that the salary and benefits costs presented by staff and adopted by the Board a few weeks ago in the Budget were inflated by at least $5.2 million for the FY 2022- 23 fiscal year to "smooth" the path for the raises? Again, what are the program impacts on services of leaving vacancies all over the system? What if by the 3rd quarter, we are in a teeth jarring recession and the County and State are both broke?

The new Board letter also points out that the County is still in negotiations with its largest unions, including SLOCEA and the Deputy Sheriffs. Won't the proposed large equity raises for the top echelon instigate demands for similar treatment by thousands of other employees? Why would management tip its hand prior to completing the other negotiations? In the military when rations are short and/or conditions are tough, the enlisted soldiers are fed before the officers.

If the Board does grant equity raises to the rank and file, what is the year over year cost, and where will that funding come from?

The County's unrepresented employees are in Bargaining Units (BU) 07 – Operations and Staff, BU08 – General Management, BU09 – Appointed Department Heads, BU10 – Elected Department Heads, BU11 – Confidential Employees, and BU16 – General Management Law Enforcement. There are currently a total of 516 unrepresented employees in these bargaining units. The Board of Supervisors is in BU17 and is not part of the unrepresented groups. Changes to the Board of Supervisors' salary are handled by separate Board action through a change to County Ordinance Code 2.48.095. However, employee benefits for the Board of Supervisors are the same as employees in BU08 and BU09.

Item 24 - Request to consider the California Department of Water Resources' certified Final Environmental Impact Report (Clerk's File) for the State Water Project Contract Extension Amendment No. 17 (Contract Extension Amendment); and submittal of a resolution making responsible agency findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to use the FEIR and approving and authorizing the Chairperson to execute the Contract Extension Amendment. The Board is being asked to approve a State Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) on the extension its State water contract. It is also being asked to execute the amended contract for State water.

This is another significant policy matter that has been placed on the consent calendar.

Back in 2018, the County, 28 other contractors, and the State Water Department of Water Resources (DWR) agreed to extend their contracts for state water from 2035 to 2085. Key purposes were to assure subcontractors in SLO County that their contracted entitlements would continue.[1] Also the State Water Project (SWP) would be able to issue long term debt for improvements to the system, as payments would be guaranteed for a longer period. Obviously, as the 2035 termination date approaches, the time compression for debt repayment becomes a growing obstacle.

Initially, the State Department of Water Resources declared that since the matter was a financial contract extension, it was categorically exempt from CEQA. In other words, no specific physical projects were being considered. Nevertheless, after numerous environmental groups, fishing advocates, and northern California agriculturalists complained, the DWR did conduct a full EIR. Now each of the contractors are being asked to endorse the EIR's conclusion that the contract extension will have "no significant effect on the environment."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED and ordered by the Board of Supervisors of the San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District that:

1. The Board has considered the environmental impacts of the Project as shown in the FEIR prior to making a decision on the Project.

2. In its independent judgment and analysis, the Board finds that the FEIR is adequate for the District's use to authorize execution of the Contract Extension Amendment between DWR and the District. More specifically, on the basis of the environmental record before the Board, including comments received, the Board has determined that the Contract Extension Amendment will not have a significant effect on the environment.

3. The Board hereby approves and authorizes and directs the Chairperson to execute the Contract Extension Amendment and to perform any such acts as may be deemed necessary or appropriate to accomplish the intent of this Resolution

The alliance of environmental groups, fishing groups, and agriculturalists is likely to sue the State on the basis that the EIR did not examine the impact of projects that have already been announced and which would be funded by the new debt that can be financed under the extended contracts. The big one is the so-called California Water Fix, which is the successor to the they Bay Delta Twin Tunnels project.

By endorsing the FEIR, will the County become a codefendant in the litigation?

Will it have to pay its share of the costs?

Will the County subcontractors, which actually use the water, pay for the costs?

Does the Board actually believe that extension of the contract for 50 years will not have environmental impacts?

Property tax: The write-up states that the County will incur no costs by endorsing the EIR because the County does not actually use the water, but subcontracts it to various water districts and cities.

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[1] It should be noted that with the recurring droughts, the SWP has not been able to deliver all of the contracted water in some years including years where only 5% was allocated. Some contractors and subcontractors had drought reserves which they were able to use. Others purchased unused water from other contractors. The Board item does not discuss this issue in relation to the big picture.

Actually, every property taxpayer in the County has been paying for project water since 1960, when the County subscribed to the Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA), which connects the SWP to the central coast. Although not technically a SWP charge, there would be no water from the SWP in the county without the CCWA tax. We think having state water is a good idea, but everyone should adopt policy with their eyes fully open.

A more strategic issue is what happens if the droughts are epochal and there is not State water in the future? Where is the feasibility study of large-scale desalination in combination with continued nuclear energy?

Item 33 - Request by the County of San Luis Obispo (LRP2022-00007) to amend the Agricultural Offset Requirements for the Paso Basin (County Land Use Ordinance, Title 22, Section 22.30.204) to extend the termination date from August 31, 2022 to the effective date of the Paso Basin Land Use Management Area Planting Ordinance, or January 31, 2023, whichever occurs sooner. An addendum to the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Countywide Water Conservation Program in 2015 (SCH Number 2014081056) has been prepared for this request. If approved, the Item will extend the Paso Basin water moratorium to January 31, 2023. It is hoped that by that date a new water regulatory planting (the proposed ordinance would control large-scale planting and thereby water use)ordinance and accompanying EIR, which are currently in process, will be completed.

The new ordinance is needed because it will take years for the State Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) plan to begin to impact the water use. Originally, when the moratorium was adopted back in 2013, it was anticipated that it would sunset when the SGMA plan was completed in January, 2020. However, it was ultimately realized that completion of the plan and approval by the State does not immediately cause any reduction in water use, let alone the construction of water saving facilities.

This in turn cased the Board to extend the moratorium to August 31, 2022. The problem is that the planting ordinance, which is seen as a gap filler, is not complete and is now scheduled to be operational no sooner than January 31, 2023.

There is a group of smaller agriculturists and residents who are trapped in limbo under the provisions of the moratorium. This is because the allowance for water use for calculating moratorium exceptions is based on a farm's prior use before the moratorium. Those years were drought years, and many small operators simply stopped watering row crops, expecting to resume when conditions improved. Now they are locked out from applying for a prior use exemption because of their shutdown during the aforementioned drought period.

The Board is fearful that if it simply ended the moratorium, large users, investors, and potential water bankers would start pumping prodigious amounts of water to build their prior use numbers vis a vis SGMA.

In the end, one government regulation begets another. Unanticipated consequences then require further regulation, which in turn begets even more problems. Had the Board simply begun implementing mechanisms to save water and restore the basin back in 2013, everyone would be on a much better track. Moreover, many of the provisions in the SGMA plan are the very things which were talked about back in 2013.

These included spreading basins, bladder dams, injection wells, drip irrigation vs. overhead sprinklers, use of recycled sewer water, and voluntary cutbacks by the largest users. COLAB and others repeatedly presented this option and were totally ignored. In fact, for the progressive left, the enviro-socialists, and big investors, creation of new government authorities wielding more regulatory powers was and is the real end game.

See a related item immediately below:

Item 34 - Hearing to consider a Resolution adopting the Updated Paso Robles Sub basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Salinas Valley – Paso Robles Area Sub basin ("Paso Basin") (Clerk's Filed) and finding that the project is exempt from Section 21000 et seq. of the California Public Resources Code (CEQA). As noted in the item above, the County submitted its State mandated SGMA Plan for the Paso Basin to the State Department of Water resources (DWR) on time in January 2020. Nothing was heard for about a year. Finally DWR indicated in June 2021 that the Plan could not be approved – "an incomplete determination."

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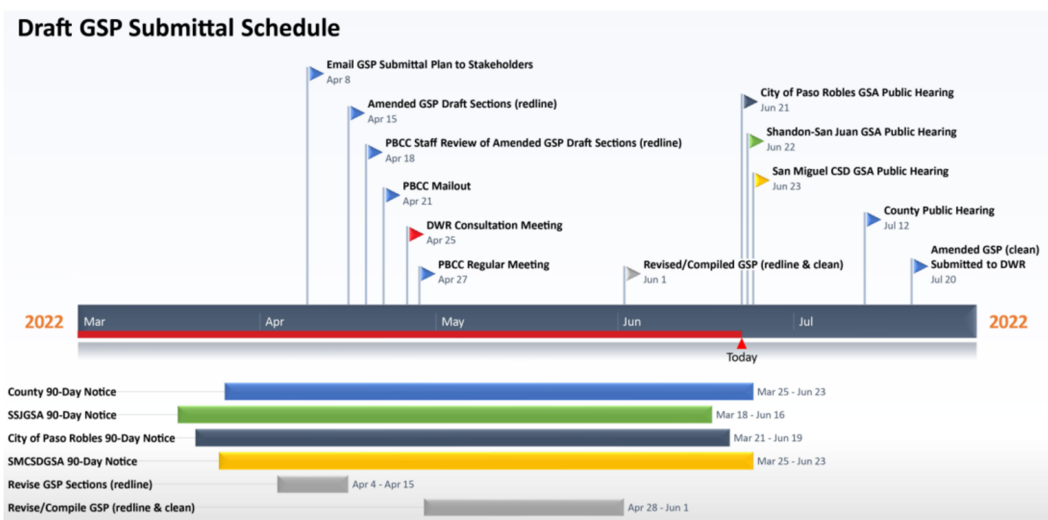
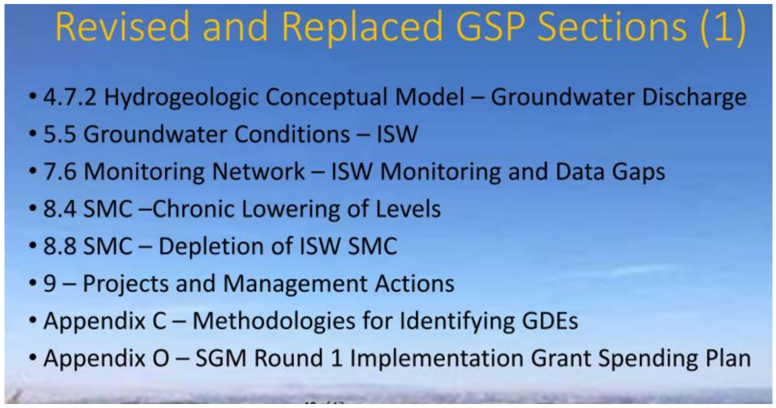
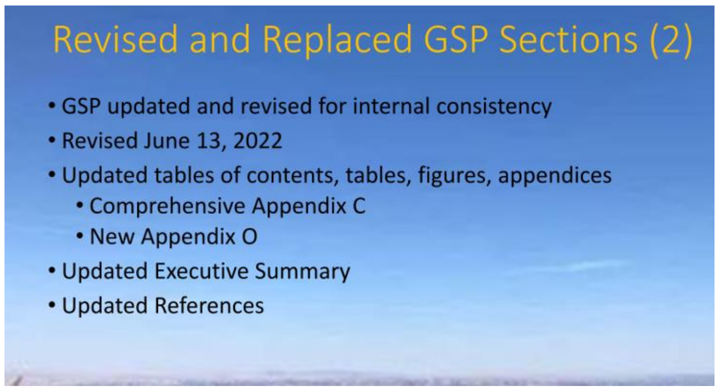
This in turn generated a new process and set of costs per the County project chart below:

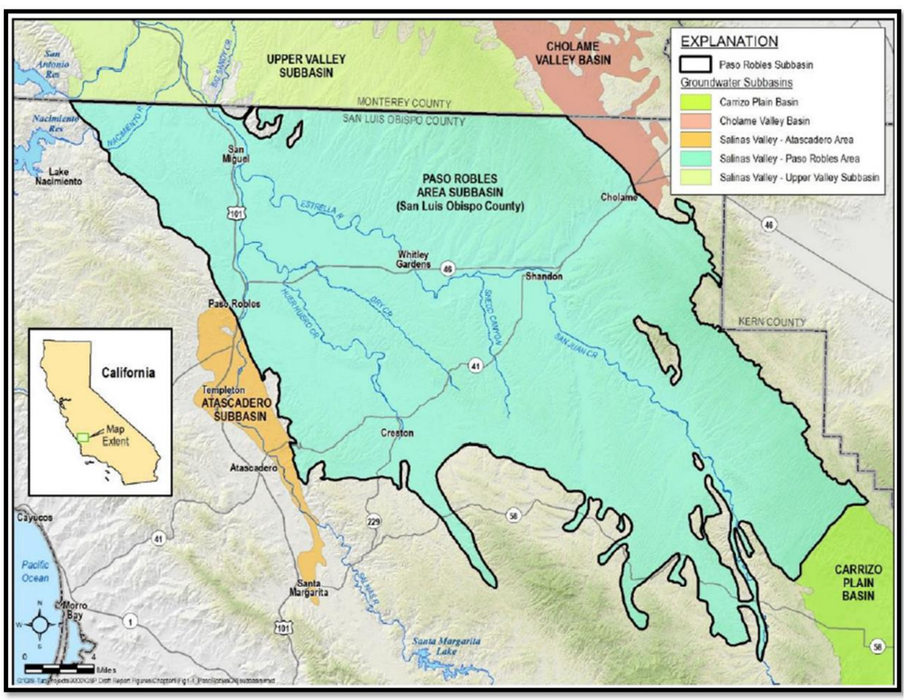


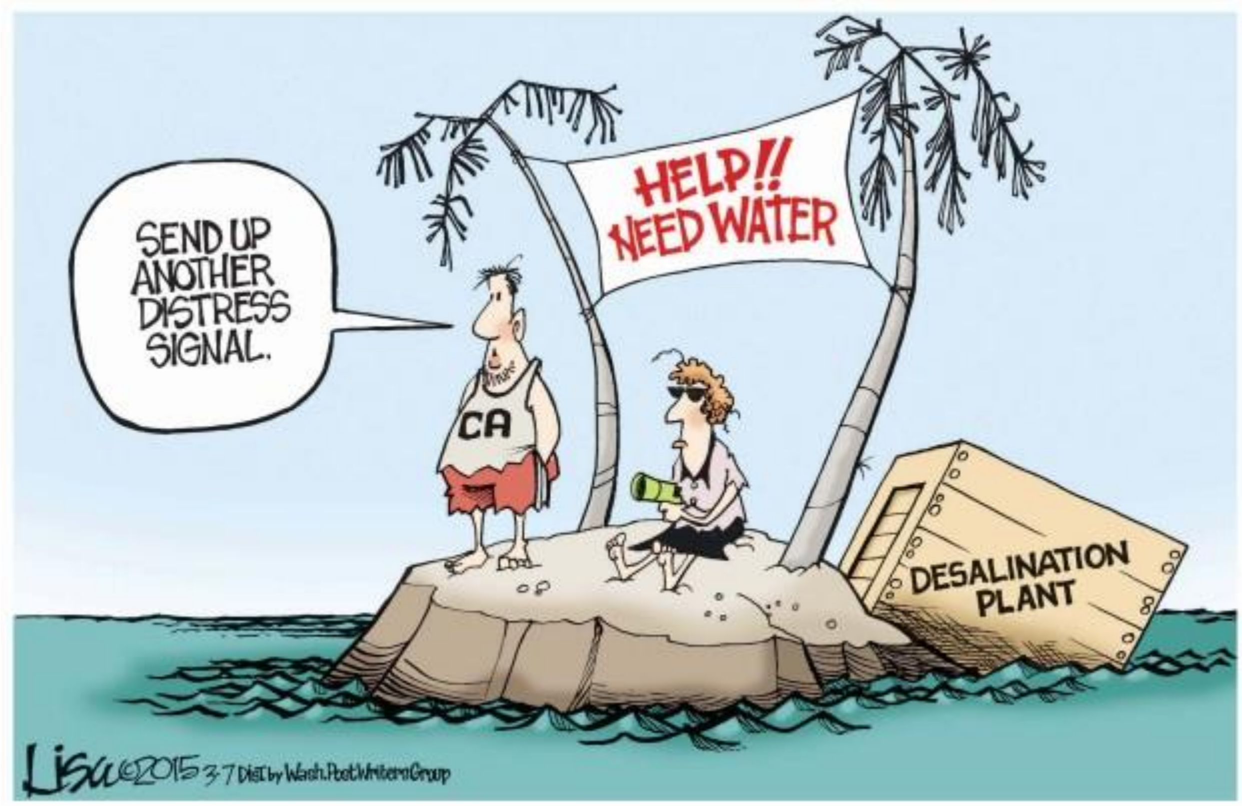
The slides below summarize various sections where amendments were made in line with instructions from the DWR staff.





Hopefully, this will result in DWR approval of the Plan before the end of 2022.





SLO Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) Meeting of Wednesday, July 13, 2022, 1:30 PM (Scheduled)

The agenda contains many housekeeping items, such as expenditure review, extension of a lease, legal authorization to continue meeting remotely, and similar non-policy items. At least they haven't decided to ban toilet paper, Kleenex, paper napkins, or paper towels yet.

Coastal Commission Meeting of Wednesday, July 13 and Thursday, July 13, 2022 (Scheduled)

Note : These items were first presented last week. It turns out that they will actually be considered this week.

Item We13.d - Fee Increases. The fees are on automatic pilot. The write-up states that they are going up 9.4 %, but then in an incomprehensible paragraph it says that the increase is always calculated on the base amount since they were first established in 2008.

The fees established … shall be increased annually by an amount calculated on the basis of the percentage change from the year in which this provision becomes effective in the California Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers as determined by the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Revenue and Taxation Code Section 2212. The increased fee amounts shall become effective on July 1 of each year. The new fee amounts shall be rounded to the nearest dollar.

Increases are based on initial costs from the year 2008, when the provision became effective. Based on the Department of Industrial Relations CPI Index Calculator, the California Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers from April 2008 to April 2022 W6d July 2022 Filing Fees Increase 2 increased by 41.2%. For the most recent increase (for the 2021-2022 fiscal year), the Commission used February 2021 to calculate fee increases. Thus, this report expresses the "year to year" increase as 9.4% (February 2021 to April 2022). This has no effect on fees over the long term, as the base for fee increases is always 2008 figures, as required by the regulation.

Huh?

In any case, some of the fees are listed below:

Some samples:

A. **Detached residential development**

Up to 4 detached, single-family residences

1,500 sq. ft. or less, $ 4,236 per residence	$____________
1,501 to 5,000 sq. ft., $ 6,354 per residence	$____________
5,001 to 10,000 sq. ft., $ 8,472 per residence	$____________
10,001 or more square feet, $ 10,590 per residence	$____________

More than 4 detached, single-family residences

1,500 sq. ft. or less, greater of $21,180 or $1,412 per residence	$____________
1,501 to 5,000 sq. ft., greater of $31,770 or $2,118 per residence	$____________
5,001 to 10,000 sq. ft., greater of $42,360 or $2,824 per residence	$____________
10,001 or more sq. ft., greater of $52,950 or $3,530 per residence	$____________

Maximum: $141,200

B. **Attached residential development**

2–4 units, $10,590	$___________
5 or more units, greater of $14,120 or $1,059 per unit	$___________
Maximum: $70,600	

II. OFFICE, COMMERCIAL, CONVENTION, INDUSTRIAL (INCLUDING ENERGY FACILITIES), AND ALL OTHER DEVELOPMENT NOT OTHERWISE IDENTIFIED

A. Gross Square Footage

1,000 gross sq. ft. or less, $7,060	
1,001 to 10,000 gross sq. ft., $14,120	$___________
10,001 to 25,000 gross sq. ft., $21,180	$___________
25,001 to 50,000 gross sq. ft., $28,240	$___________
50,001 to 100,000 gross sq. ft., $42,360	$___________
100,001 or more gross sq. ft., $70,600	$___________
	$___________

B. Development Cost Note: *Development cost includes all expenditures, including the cost for planning, engineering, architectural, and other services, made or to be made for designing the project, plus the estimated cost of construction of all aspects of the project both inside and outside the Commission's jurisdiction.*

$100,000 or less: fee $4,236	$___________
$100,001 to $500,000: fee $8,472	$___________
$500,001 to $2,000,000: fee $14,120	$___________
$2,000,001 to $5,000,000: fee $28,240	$___________
$5,000,001 to $10,000,000: fee $35,300	$___________
$10,000,001 to $25,000,000: fee $42,360	$___________
$25,000,001 to $50,000,000: fee $70,600	$___________
$50,000,001 to $100,000,000: fee $141,200	$___________
$100,000,001 or more: fee $353,000	$___________

Yikes! Do applicants get slugged for both the per unit costs and the so-called development costs? Note, these costs are on top of all the costs paid to the permitting city or county.

Item Th13a - Commission and County in Dispute over Permitting of Additional Dwelling Units (ADU's): The County submitted the coastal version of its new zoning (in accordance with State mandates) for permitting ADUs to the Commission for a Coastal Plan Consistency determination. The Commission staff disagreed with some of the County's provisions and wanted to impose its changes on the County. In turn the County declined and is requesting the Commission to grant a one-year extension in an effort to attempt to work it out. The Commission staff recommends granting the extension.

No applications for ADUs in the County's unincorporated coastal areas can be processed. For at least a year. Thus in Los Osos, Cambria, Avila Beach, Cayucos, and Oceano Ranch, your aging mother is likely to die of old age, before she can move into a new ADU. So much for the County and State "housing priority."

Item Th14b - Cambria Christmas Market Substantial Issue Determination: The County **approved** extension of the Cambria Christmas Market for 2 years. Some neighbors appealed to the Coastal Commission to take over the issue and overturn the County approval. The actual issue before the Commission at this point is whether the Commission determines that there is substantive issue that would make it legal for the Commission to take over the jurisdiction.

The staff studied the matter and determined that there is no substantial issue involving the Coastal Act, as the event is short and temporary. Staff recommends that the Commission turn down the appellants' request.

Who knows what the Commissioners will do?

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, July 14, 2022 (Scheduled)

Item 8 - A study session to review the proposed Dana Reserve Specific Plan and the associated Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The Dana Reserve Specific Plan is a proposal to allow up to 1,289 residential units, 110,000-203,000 square feet of commercial floor area, educational and daycare uses, open space, recreation areas, trails, and associated infrastructure on a 288- acre parcel. The property is located west of Highway 101 between Willow Road and the residential lots north of Sandydale Drive, immediately north of the Nipomo Urban Reserve Line and within the Nipomo Community Services District Sphere of Influence. This appears to be the most significant housing project under consideration in the unincorporated county area. The site is near the intersection of the Willow Road/Highway 101 interchange in Nipomo. The interchange plus connecting roadway was built about 10 years ago and cost over $40 million. Additionally, the County required itself to plant a ton of oak trees as a mitigation measure, which wound up costing $1 million. It is a perfect site for homes of various prices as well as some commercial development next to Highway 101.

The current zoning is for rural residence (RR), which generally requires 1-acre minimum lot sizes. For this reason the applicants are requesting approval of a specific plan that would allow a mixed-use development with clustered homes of varying densities. The map displays the overall plan.

The problem is that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), concludes that the project is not approvable at a workable size and scope. Other than the no-project alternative, all the other potential versions would require the Board of Supervisors to override a number of unmitigable Class I CEQA impacts. If the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors ultimately approve the project, that approval would likely be challenged in a lawsuit.

One alternative would be for the County to conduct a massive revision of its Plan of Development and Land Use and Circulation Plan Element to recognize the urbanization of the area. This could take a decade. It would also come up against the County's overarching land use policy of concentrating development in its village centers and incorporated cities.

Another alternative would be to submit the project to the voters and ask for their approval. If approved, the Courts would have a harder time denying it under CEQA, as the approval would be an act of the people. The courts would be a little reluctant, but there is still no guarantee.

No action is proposed at this time, as the EIR is currently being circulated for public comment. The purpose of Thursday's meeting is to familiarize the Commission with the project via a workshop. However, the Commissions' comments within in the context of the EIR may impact the future of the project.

The table below shows how the alternatives stack up under CEQA. You can pretty much read the word "similar" in the various columns as meaning an unmitigable Class I impact for each of the issue areas listed.

Table 5-3. Comparison of Impacts Among Alternatives

Issue Area	No Project Alternative	Alternative 1: Applicant-Preferred Alternative	Alternative 2: La Cañada Ranch	Alternative 3: Residential Rural Cluster Subdivision	Alternative 4: Development on Non-Native Grassland	Alternative 5: Gradual Transition along the Fringe
Aesthetics	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Agriculture	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Air Quality	Decreased	Similar	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar
Biological Resources	Decreased	Similar	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased	Similar
Cultural Resources	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Energy	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Geology and Soils	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Decreased	Similar	Decreased	Decreased	Similar	Similar
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Hydrology and Water Quality	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Land Use and Planning	Decreased	Similar	Decreased	Decreased	Similar	Similar
Mineral Resources	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Noise	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Population and Housing	Decreased	Similar	Decreased	Decreased	Similar	Similar
Public Services	Increased	Similar	Similar	Decreased	Similar	Similar
Recreation	Decreased	Similar	Increased	Similar	Similar	Similar
Transportation and Traffic	Decreased	Similar	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar
Tribal Cultural Resources	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Utilities and Service Systems	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Increased/ Similar	Similar	Similar
Wildfire	Decreased	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Meets Project Objectives?	No	Yes	Partially	Partially	Partially	Yes

The CEQA analysis details the area as a mixed chaparral and oak woodland, full of rare plants, birds, insects, mammals, and reptiles. The fact that it is surrounded on two sides by residential development, one side by the afore-mentioned $40 million dollar road project, and the transcontinental Highway 101 on the other does not seem to receive any consideration. The EIR also contains substantial objection due to job housing imbalance. Apparently, the logic is that the people who would live in the development will be commuting to san Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo. This in turn will generate too much CO_2, plunging the planet into an irreversible environmental catastrophe.

While CEQA is touted as only an analysis of the issues, it is used to kill many worthy projects and is a major contributor to the State's and County's housing crisis and destruction of its middle class. In this regard, it has devolved into an unmitigated evil.

You would think that everyone would be thrilled to have 1,289 new homes, many of which will be affordable to the work force, at this location. The new Board of Supervisors coming in next January will be tested on this one.

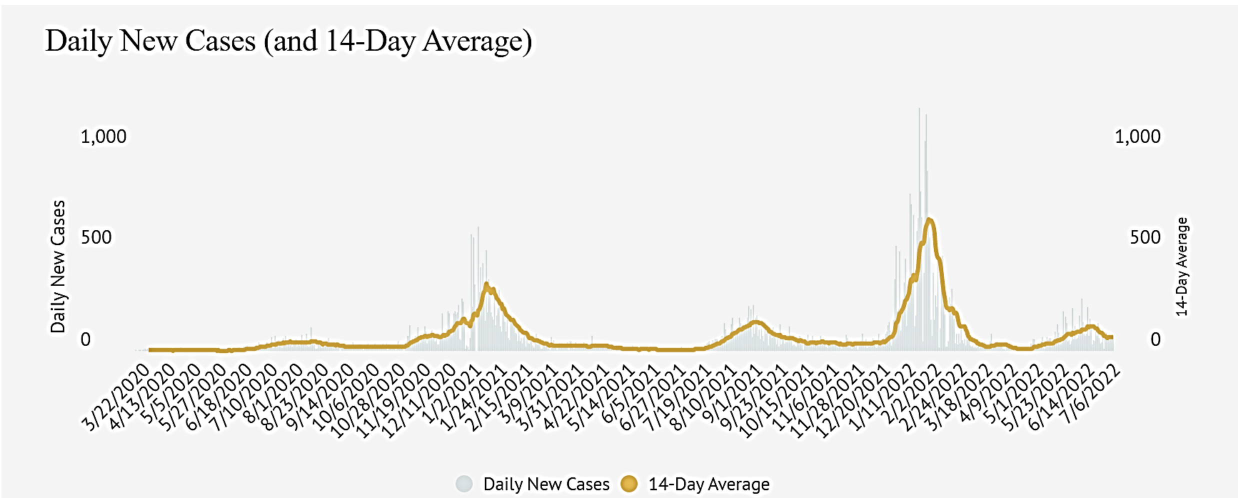
LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No of Supervisors meeting of Tuesday, July 5, 2022 (Not Scheduled)

The next scheduled meeting is set for Tuesday, July 12, 2022.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - COVID. A new sub version of the virus is hitting LA and the Bay Area hard. It is reportedly highly transmissible. SLO County reported an uptick this week.



18 (0 ICU)** SLO County Residents with COVID-19 in Hospital

Item 2 - Final Election Final Results (Finally). As of 5:00 PM (close of business) Friday, July 8, 2022, there was no revision to the agenda to add an item for the Board to certify the election. It may pop up over the weekend.

County Supervisor, 2nd District (Vote for 1)

Precincts Reported: 23 of 23 (100.00%)

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Times Cast	595	17,581	18,176 / 36,806	49.38%
Undervotes	34	1,009	1,043	
Overvotes	0	11	11	

Candidate	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
BRUCE GIBSON	154	7,996	8,150	47.60%
BRUCE JONES	131	3,121	3,252	18.99%
GEOFF AUSLEN	126	2,845	2,971	17.35%
JOHN WHITWORTH	150	2,599	2,749	16.06%
Total Votes	561	16,561	17,122	

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Unresolved Write-In	0	0	0	

County Supervisor, 3rd District (Partial Term, 2010 Boundary) (Vote for 1)

Precincts Reported: 25 of 25 (100.00%)

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Times Cast	517	18,746	19,263 / 38,543	49.98%
Undervotes	36	1,096	1,132	
Overvotes	0	14	14	

Candidate	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
DAWN ORTIZ-LEGG	185	11,184	11,369	62.75%
STACY A. KORSGADEN	275	5,900	6,175	34.08%
ARNOLD RUIZ	21	552	573	3.16%
Total Votes	481	17,636	18,117	

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Unresolved Write-In	0	0	0	

County Supervisor, 4th District (Vote for 1)

Precincts Reported: 29 of 29 (100.00%)

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Times Cast	609	20,938	21,547 / 40,057	53.79%
Undervotes	29	615	644	
Overvotes	0	4	4	

Candidate	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
JIMMY PAULDING	205	10,564	10,769	51.53%
LYNN COMPTON	375	9,755	10,130	48.47%
Total Votes	580	20,319	20,899	

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Unresolved Write-In	0	0	0	

County Clerk-Recorder (Vote for 1)

Precincts Reported: 117 of 117 (100.00%)

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Times Cast	2,651	85,622	88,273 / 181,894	48.53%
Undervotes	315	8,916	9,231	
Overvotes	1	62	63	

Candidate	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
ELAINA CANO	970	47,815	48,785	61.77%
JAMES ARTHUR BAUGH	883	16,699	17,582	22.26%
STEWART DAVID (STEW) JENKINS	482	12,130	12,612	15.97%
Total Votes	2,335	76,644	78,979	

	Polling	Vote by Mail	Total	
Unresolved Write-In	0	0	0	

Item 3 - International Situation: The tempo of the provocations is increasing. The *Open Source Intelligence Service* reported on Friday:

July 08, 2022 - China sent military aircraft into the Taiwan Strait on Friday, a move that Taiwan is calling "provocative", as U.S. senator Rick Scott visited the island in order to meet with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, which China has openly criticized.

July 08, 2022 - Belarus has given Russia full control of the Zyabrovka air field located about 19 miles from the Belarusian border with Ukraine in the Gomel region, according to Oleksiy Gromov, deputy chief of the Main Operative Department of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

July 08, 2022 - Russian President Vladimir Putin says that the "special military operation" in Ukraine "has not started anything in earnest," and said that the "war in Ukraine just beginning; hints that peace talks will become more difficult with time."

July 08, 2022 - TURKEY - After a cabinet meeting on Monday, the President of Turkey announced that a new military operation would be underway in Syria, to stabilize logistics between 2 already Turkish-controlled areas. The operation will target Turkish efforts at resuming a 20-mile (30km) safe zone along the Turkish-Syrian border.

July 07, 2022 - A U.S. flight test of the reentry vehicle for the new Minotaur II+ Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) rocket failed when it exploded 11 seconds after launching from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

We have noticed increased activity around Vandenberg, including an unannounced missile launch on Friday, numerous sonic booms over a several-day period, and KC 135 tankers refueling smaller planes.

It now appears that the Russians are committed to grinding down the Ukrainians. The weakness of President Biden (who is rapidly losing support in his own party), the turmoil in the US economy, the distracting imposition of political correctness and wokeism in the US military, the collapse of US military recruitment quotas, the resignation of the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and the evaporation of the US southern border combine to tempt our enemies.

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

NEWSOM HAS A PLAN TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON IN CALIFORNIA — USING FOSSIL FUEL

BY SAMMY ROTH

A controversial plan from Gov. Gavin Newsom would reshape how business is done on the California power grid, potentially helping to extend the life of beachfront gas plants and the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, making it easier for solar and wind farm developers to sidestep local government opposition, and limiting environmental reviews for all kinds of energy projects.

State lawmakers could vote as early as Wednesday night on the polarizing legislation, whose text was revealed late Sunday.

The bill would give the Department of Water Resources unprecedented authority to build or buy energy from any facility that can help keep the lights on during the next few summers — including polluting diesel generators and four gas-fired power plants along the Southern California coast that were originally supposed to close in 2020 but were rescued by state officials.

Those decisions would be exempt from the normal public input process under the California Environmental Quality Act — and from approval by agencies such as the California Coastal Commission and local air quality management districts.

A separate provision would allow companies building solar farms, wind turbines and lithium-ion batteries — as well as electric lines to connect those facilities to the grid — to opt in to an accelerated approval process that doesn't require sign-off from county governments. State officials would be required to conduct environmental reviews and approve or deny those projects within nine months. Legal challenges to any project approvals would need to be resolved by state courts within another nine months.

The legislation is technically a follow-up to the state budget approved by lawmakers earlier this month. It's part of the Newsom administration's frenetic effort to address twin challenges: the risk of blackouts and the growing dangers of the climate crisis.

It's been almost two years since brief rolling blackouts roiled the state on two brutally hot August evenings when there wasn't enough electricity supply to power millions of air conditioners after the sun went down and solar panels stopped generating.

Electric utilities have managed to keep the lights on since then — barely. But preventing outages is only getting harder as fossil fuel emissions heat the planet, extreme drought drains hydropower reservoirs and worsening wildfires disrupt power lines.

Newsom responded last month by asking lawmakers to approve a $5.2-billion "strategic electricity reliability reserve" that would pay for emergency power supplies over the next few years. But he surprised many observers with Sunday's proposal to let the Department of Water Resources secure those supplies through a special review process at the California Energy Commission, which critics say could limit opportunities for public input and lead to more pollution in low-income communities of color.

The strategic reserve "is an insurance policy that will only be used when we face potential shortfall during extreme climate-change driven events (e.g. heatwaves, wildfire disruptions to transmission)," the Newsom administration says in a bill summary.

But the governor's proposal startled climate activists, energy developers and local officials.

In an opposition letter Tuesday, two dozen groups — including the Sierra Club, the California Environmental Justice Alliance, the National Parks Conservation Assn. and Audubon — said Newsom's plan has gone through hardly any public review.

Alexis Sutterman, energy equity manager at the California Environmental Justice Alliance, called the bill "incredibly dangerous."

"It's putting billions of dollars into keeping fossil fuel infrastructure online at a time when we should be doing everything we can to move away from fossil fuels, both for equity and the sake of our climate," Sutterman said.

Especially controversial are gas-fired power plants in Redondo Beach, Huntington Beach, Long Beach and Oxnard that were supposed to shut down by the end of 2020 under a decade-old policy requiring coastal power plants to stop sucking up large amounts of ocean water — a process known as "once through cooling" that kills fish and other marine life. In a series of decisions after the August 2020 rolling blackouts, the state water board agreed to let those plants keep operating three more years.

If the Legislature approves Newsom's plan, the Department of Water Resources could buy energy from those plants beyond 2023 — or even buy the facilities outright, critics fear. That possibility has left Redondo Beach Mayor Bill Brand feeling blindsided.

"We feel double-crossed," Brand said. "These retirement dates were set 12 years ago."

Redondo Beach Mayor Bill Brand has fought for years to shut down the gas-fired power plant in his city. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)

Ana Matosantos, Newsom's cabinet secretary, told The Times the gas plants won't be allowed to stay open after 2023 without approval from the state water board — an interpretation disputed by climate activists, who say the bill clearly states otherwise.

Matosantos also downplayed speculation that the bill would save the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, currently slated to close in 2025. While she acknowledged that the Department of Water Resources could, in theory, buy some electricity from the nuclear plant, she said keeping it open past 2025 would require additional legislation, as well as approval from federal agencies.

Under Newsom's proposal, the Department of Water Resources would also be able to contract for large energy storage projects such as lithium-ion batteries. Any newly purchased diesel backup generators would need to stop operating after July 2023.

The bill also includes $200 million for programs that pay people and businesses to use less energy when the grid is stressed.

For longtime clean energy lobbyist V. John White, Newsom's plan is a necessary evil. The Public Utilities Commission, he said, has put California in an impossible position by failing to line up climate-friendly resources that can provide power after sundown — such as batteries, geothermal plants and long-duration energy storage — even though the agency has known for more than a decade that the coastal gas plants would shut down, and since 2016 that the Diablo Canyon reactors would soon join them.

"These are extraordinary circumstances," White said. "The tragedy here is we have plenty of wind and solar and geothermal to buy, but we waited so long that now we're having trouble getting it online in time to meet the needs that we have."

Even as Newsom scrambles to keep the lights on during the next few summers, White said, the governor needs to show stronger climate leadership and develop a long-term strategy to accelerate renewable energy while avoiding power supply emergencies.

The other controversial provision in Newsom's proposal could help on that front, by allowing solar and wind developers to seek faster approval from the Energy Commission — although even those companies aren't sure how much difference it would make.

Local governments have at times emerged as a serious obstacle to clean energy, with San Bernardino County supervisors banning solar and wind farms on more than 1 million acres in 2019 and Shasta County supervisors set to vote next month on a wind farm moratorium. Shasta and Humboldt counties have both rejected proposed wind farms in recent years — an increasingly common occurrence across the Western U.S. as local residents raise concerns about environmental damage and diminished views.

Major solar companies have been focused on building better relationships with local officials rather than pushing to circumvent county approval, several people familiar with the industry's thinking told The Times. The California Wind Energy Assn., on the other hand, supports Newsom's plan to let the state handle permitting where developers prefer it, executive director Nancy Rader said.

The plan for speedier solar and wind approvals has also drawn support from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Developers who opt in to the streamlined process would need to hire union workers through project labor agreements.

"We think that's a wise balancing of an option for developers who have their ducks in a row and want to go to the Energy Commission, which is extremely capable and competent and talented," said Marc Joseph, an attorney representing IBEW.

Major environmental groups haven't taken a position on Newsom's proposal to streamline project approval, after an earlier provision that would have eliminated additional layers of review — including from the Coastal Commission — was removed.

Local governments, though, are furious.

In a letter opposing the bill, the California State Assn. of Counties, Urban Counties of California, Rural County Representatives of California and the League of California Cities said renewable energy facilities "can have enormous impacts on local communities." They said the Energy Commission approval process is "overly broad, usurps local control, excludes local governments from meaningful involvement in major development projects within their jurisdictions, and could result in even more litigation."

The Department of Water Resources pathway, meanwhile, is "an unprecedented law change with no policy hearing," said Catherine Freeman, a legislative representative at the county association. She called it "a complete removal of local permitting."

Even if the bill passes, California will have plenty of challenges trying to reach 100% clean energy by 2045, as required by state law — a timeline Newsom has said should be sped up. The state will need to build solar farms, wind turbines and other clean energy resources at an unprecedented rate — especially as the growth of electric cars and electric heating drives up power demand.

For the next few summers, all eyes will be on the California Independent System Operator, which is responsible for balancing supply and demand across most of the state — and calling for rolling blackouts if there's not enough electricity to go around.

So was the grid operator involved in crafting Newsom's proposal? That's not entirely clear. Spokesperson Anne Gonzales said only that the agency "offered technical assistance and reviewed specific provisions that would require [our] involvement."

“The strategic reserves are primarily meant to support reliability beginning in summer 2023,” she said in an email.

Sammy Roth covers energy for the Los Angeles Times and writes the weekly Boiling Point newsletter. He previously reported for the Desert Sun in Palm Springs. He grew up in Westwood and would very much like to see the Dodgers win the World Series again. The article first appeared in the LA Times of June 28, 2022.

. OPINION: AN ANSWER TO EXPLODING ENERGY PRICES AND RISING EMISSIONS

BY BJORN LOMBORN

For three decades, climate campaigners have fought to make fossil fuels so expensive that people would be forced to abandon them. Their dream is becoming a reality: Energy prices are spiraling out of control and will soon get worse. Yet, we are no closer to solving climate change.

Energy costs increased 26% across industrialized economies last year and will rise globally by an additional 50% this year. While Western governments are blaming Russia’s war on Ukraine, prices were already rising because of climate policies that choke fossil fuel investment. Since the 2015 Paris climate agreement was inked, the world’s 1,200 biggest energy corporations have slashed capital investment in oil and gas by more than two-thirds. Huge price rises are the inevitable result of forcing more energy out of an increasingly starved system.

The climate policy approach of pushing consumers and businesses away from fossil fuels with price spikes is causing pain with little climate pay-off for two reasons.225p

First, solar and wind can meet only a fraction of global electricity needs. Even with massive subsidies and political support, solar and wind delivered just 9 percent of global electricity in 2020. Heating, transport and vital industrial processes account for much more energy use than electricity. This means solar and wind deliver just 1.8% of the global energy supply. And electricity is the easiest of these components to decarbonize: we haven’t made meaningful progress in greening the remaining four-fifths of global energy.

Second, even in the rich world it is clear that few people are willing to pay the phenomenal price of achieving net-zero carbon emissions. Soaring prices are hiking energy poverty in industrialized economies, and prices climb even further. Germany is on track to spend more than half a trillion dollars on climate policies by 2025, yet has managed to reduce fossil fuel dependency only from 84% in 2000 to 77% today. McKinsey & Co., a global management consulting firm, estimates that getting to zero carbon will cost Europe 5.3% of its GDP in low-emission assets every year, or for Germany more than $200 billion annually. That is more than Germany spends annually on education and police, courts and prisons combined.

Policymakers in Western countries can't continue to push expensive policies without a backlash. As energy prices soar, risks grow of resentment and strife, as France saw with the "yellow vest" protest movement.

Rising energy prices are even more serious for the poorest billions because they block the pathway out of poverty and make fertilizer unaffordable for farmers, imperiling food production. The well-off in rich countries might be able to withstand the pain of some climate policies, but emerging economies like India or low-income countries in Africa cannot afford to sacrifice poverty eradication and economic development to tackle climate change.

Globally, the inability of green energy to compete means the world is on track to remain dependent on fossil fuels. Analyzing all current and promised climate policies, the International Energy Agency finds fossil fuels will still provide two-thirds of global energy use by 2050, only a modest drop from 79 percent today.

And green energy's failings are why carbon emissions are still increasing. Last year saw the highest global emissions ever. This year is likely to be higher again. Climate policy is broken. By forcing up the price of fossil fuels, policymakers have put the cart in front of the horse. Instead, we need to make green energy much cheaper and more effective.

Humanity has relied on innovation to fix other big challenges. We didn't solve air pollution by forcing everyone to stop driving but by inventing the catalytic converter that drastically lowers pollution. We didn't slash hunger by telling everyone to eat less but through the Green Revolution that enabled farmers to produce much more food.

Yet, innovation in green energy has been neglected for three decades. In 1980, the rich world spent more than 8 cents of every $100 of GDP on low-carbon technologies. As climate policies focused on making fossil fuels more expensive, green research spending halved to less than 4 cents on every $100.

Researchers for Copenhagen Consensus, including three Nobel laureate economists, have shown the most effective climate policy possible is to increase green R&D spending fivefold to $100 billion per year. This would still be much less than the $755 billion the world spent just last year on often ineffective, current green technology.

We don't know where the breakthroughs will happen. They could come in nuclear energy, which can provide reliable power around-the-clock unlike the intermittency of solar or wind, but remains much more expensive than fossil fuels. With more R&D, "fourth generation" nuclear could provide much cheaper, safer power. But we need to look for breakthroughs across all areas of energy technology, from cheaper solar and wind with massive and very cheap storage to carbon-dioxide extraction, fusion, second-generation biofuels and many other potential solutions.

Climate change will not be solved by making fossil energy unaffordable but by innovating down the price of green technologies so everyone will be able to switch.

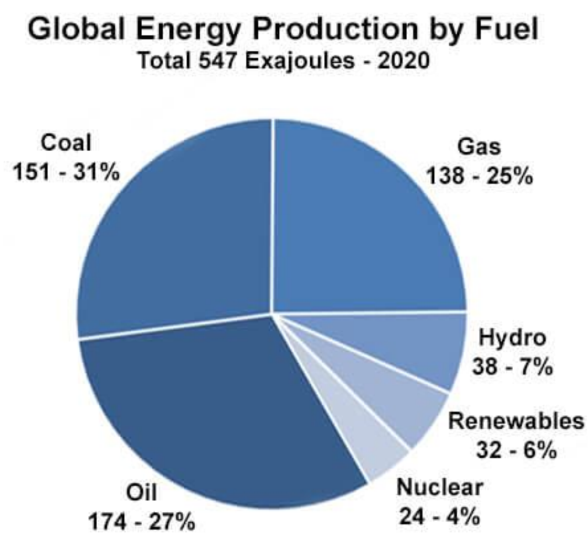
Bjorn Lomborg is president of the Copenhagen Consensus and a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. His latest book is "False Alarm — How Climate Change Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts the Poor, and Fails to Fix the Planet." He wrote this for InsideSources.com. *This article first appeared in the July 6, 2022 edition of the Stanford University Hoover Institution Update.*

HOW MUCH FOSSIL FUEL IS LEFT?

HUMANITY CAN ADAPT TO WHATEVER CLIMATE CHANGE MAY OCCUR—WITH SUFFICIENT PROSPERITY AND POLITICAL WILL.

BY EDWARD RING

Fossil fuel powers the economic engine of civilization. With a minor disruption in the supply of fossil fuel, crops wither, and supply chains crash. With a major disruption, a humanitarian apocalypse could engulf the world. Events of the past few months have made this clear. Without energy, civilization dies, and in 2020 fossil fuels continued to provide more than 80 percent of all energy consumed worldwide.



This basic fact, that maintaining a reliable supply of affordable fossil fuel is a nonnegotiable condition for the survival of civilization, currently eludes far too many American politicians, including Joe Biden. Observes energy expert and two-time candidate for governor of California Michael Shellenberger: "One month ago, the Biden administration killed a one-million-acre oil and gas lease sale in Alaska, and seven days ago killed new on-shore oil and gas leases in the continental U.S. In fact, at this very moment, the Biden administration is considering a total ban on new offshore oil and gas drilling."

Another basic fact, easily confirmed by consulting the 2021 edition of the BP Statistical Review of Global Energy, is that if every person living on Earth were to consume half as much energy per year as the average American currently consumes, global energy production would need to nearly double. Instead of producing 547 exajoules (the mega unit of energy currently favored by economists) per year, energy producers worldwide would need to come up with just over 1,000 exajoules. How exactly will "renewables," currently delivering 32 exajoules per year, or six percent of global energy, expand by a factor of 30 to deliver 1,000 exajoules?

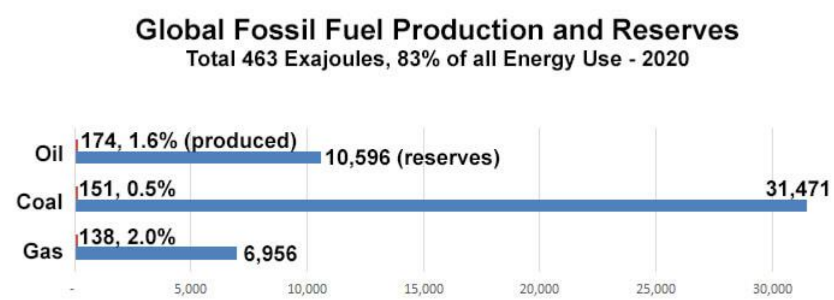
The short answer is, it can't. Despite the fanatical, powerful group-think that calls for the abolition of not only fossil fuels but also most hydroelectric power and all nuclear power, the reality is that most nations of the world are going to continue to develop every source of energy they can, and they're going to do it as fast as they can. Renewables may have a growing role in that expansion, but renewables are decades away from providing more than a fraction of total global energy production.

How Much Do We Have Left?

The argument against fossil fuels rests on two premises. The first is that carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels are causing a climate emergency. Without (for now) arguing against the theory that anthropogenic CO2 is going to destroy the planet, suffice to say that we'd better adapt to whatever climate change is coming, because the only nations even semi-serious about eliminating the use of fossil fuels are Western nations. Once again, recent events have demonstrated that fossil fuel isn't going anywhere, and nations that renounce its use condemn themselves to deindustrialization and eventual irrelevance.

The other premise underlying the drive to eliminate fossil fuels is more pragmatic. We are reaching "peak oil," and there simply isn't enough of it to last much longer. Oil, natural gas, and coal are all nonrenewable resources, with finite reserves. This argument is worth examining in depth.

The chart below shows how much fossil fuel is left in the world in the form of proven reserves (the blue bars), as well as how much, by fuel, was used up in 2020 (red bars, which are so short you can hardly see them). In 2020, 174 exajoules of oil were burned, with 10,596 exajoules remaining—a 61-year supply. As of 2020, and at current rates of consumption, there is a 208-year supply of worldwide coal reserves and a 50-year supply of natural gas.



These proven reserves, also reported in the 2021 edition of the BP Statistical Review of Global Energy, don't tell the whole story. There are "unproven" reserves, which would very likely double the amount of fossil-fuel energy available for extraction, and possibly provide even more. To understand this, first note that predictions of "peak oil" have been consistently wrong. In a well-known early example, economist M. King Hubbert presented a paper to the American Petroleum Institute in 1956 where he noted "the rate of consumption of these fuels was greater than the rate at which new reserves were being discovered." Hubbert predicted U.S. oil production would peak in the 1970s, and indeed there was a peak in 1971, at just over 10 million barrels per day. By 2008, total U.S. production had fallen to as little as 4 million barrels per day. But thanks to the introduction of fracking and deregulation, domestic oil production had risen to a new peak of over 12 million barrels per day by 2019. New technologies and new exploration resulted in a major expansion of proven reserves.

Another indication of how much energy may remain out there in unproven reserves that are waiting to be tapped is in this 2022 report by the U.S. Energy Information Administration. It estimates America's total proven natural gas reserves at 473 trillion cubic feet, but estimates additional unproven reserves of natural gas could total another 2,867 trillion cubic feet—six times as much.

Finally, consider the map of Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa is a massive continent—more than 4,600 miles across at its widest point, compared to the lower 48 United States at only 2,800 miles wide—with massive reserves of oil and gas. The map below shows promising regions for onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration amount to hundreds of thousands of square miles. Now consider this report on "Natural Gas Reserves By Country." Despite its vast potential, the first Sub-Saharan nation on the list is Angola, which ranks 40th in the world, with proven gas reserves equal to 0.14 percent of total global reserves. That's probably a minute fraction of what Africa's got.

Africa isn't the only place where fossil fuel reserves have been barely tapped. Expect deposits to be found as needed pretty much everywhere, from the polar regions to countless offshore sites on the continental shelf, and elsewhere.

The current energy crisis is going to harm nations in Africa, and in other developing regions, far more than it will harm Western nations. That's saying a lot, considering how cold it's going to get in places like Berlin and Copenhagen if Russian gas is turned off this winter. But in African nations, the primary source of affordable energy is "biomass." Put less euphemistically, and to this day, hundreds of millions of Africans still desperately strip the forests in order to gather fuel to cook food, because Western nations and Western-dominated banks have prevented them from developing clean natural gas.

This humanitarian folly is multifaceted. In 1950, there were 227 million people living in Africa. Today, there are 1.4 billion Africans, and by 2050 Africa's population is projected to top 2.5 billion. On what had been a stable population for centuries, Africa's population explosion was facilitated by Western aid, which reduced infant mortality and provided better food aid and healthcare overall. But now Western nations are denying Africans the prosperity and self-sufficiency that comes with affordable energy, all in the name of averting a climate disaster.

This absurdity ignores the catastrophic impact of a burgeoning population denied access to fertilizer, industrial agriculture, and a reliable power grid because these are byproducts of fossil fuel. Deliberately denying Africans the fundamental prerequisite for prosperity means their population will continue to explode at the same time as millions of them, desperate for food and fuel, will continue to strip the forests of wood and wildlife. Without exception, however, once a nation begins to experience prosperity, the population stabilizes and begins to decline.

There Is Plenty of Fossil Fuel

According to the most authoritative source on energy in the world, total proven reserves of fossil fuel currently total 49,023 exajoules. This means that just with proven reserves, and if only fossil fuel were used, and if global energy consumption were doubled to 1,000 exajoules per year, there would still be a 50-year supply of energy. How much more fossil fuel can be extracted from unproven reserves is anybody's guess, but it is a safe bet that twice as much more is available, meaning there's at least another century's worth of fossil fuel even if we used nothing else to power civilization.

The benefits of abundant cheap energy are obvious: prosperity and voluntary population stabilization. In the decades to come, other forms of energy will be further developed. If hydroelectric power doubles, while nuclear power and renewables both go up by an order of magnitude, the three together would provide 636 exajoules of power per year. Under that scenario, fossil-fuel use could remain near current levels, and total global energy production would still double to 1,000 exajoules.

What is impossible, however, is for renewables alone to achieve this level of growth. More than half of renewable energy today comes from biofuel and biomass, which—ironically—is already wreaking havoc across the tropics as hundreds of thousands of square miles of rainforest are incinerated to make room for cane ethanol and palm oil plantations. And then there are the minerals required for the wind turbine towers, the silicon photovoltaics, and the billions of megawatt-hours of battery farm capacity. Where are the Malthusians when you need them?

Humanity can adapt to whatever climate change may occur, if there is sufficient prosperity and political will. We are already on the brink of commercializing innovations to turn carbon dioxide into liquid fuel. Should atmospheric CO2 be the horrific pollutant that so many claim it to be, it can be removed from the atmosphere and converted into fuel to drive our trucks around.

Edward Ring is a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is also is a contributing editor and senior fellow with the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. Ring is the author of *Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism* (2021) and *The*

Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California (2022). *This article first appeared in the American Greatness of July 6, 2022.*

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ANDY CALDWELL SHOW NOW LOCAL IN SLO COUNTY

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in *Santa Barbara, Santa Maria & San Luis Obispo Counties!*

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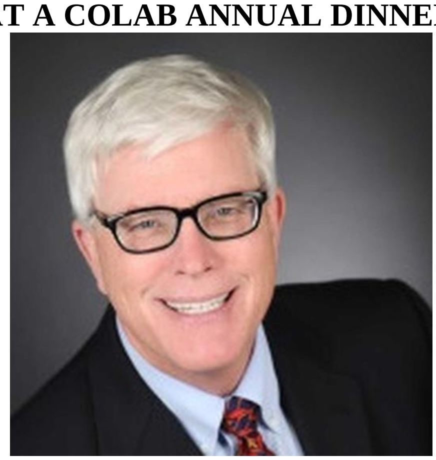
DAN WALTERS EXPLAINS SACTO MACHINATIONS AT A COLAB FORUM

AUTHOR & NATIONALLY SYNDICATED COMMENTATOR BEN SHAPIRO APPEARED AT A COLAB ANNUAL DINNER



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