



**WEEKLY UPDATE
OCTOBER 29 - NOVEMBER 4, 2023**

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**PASO BASIN BLENDED WATER STUDY
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**COUNTY TO REJOIN WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
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THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS
ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, October 31, 2023 (Scheduled)

Item 6 - Request to approve appointments in-lieu of election to the Shandon-San Juan Water District. There were no challengers, which allows the District to petition the Board to reappoint incumbent members.

The District requests that the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, at a regular or special meeting held prior to December 1, 2023, appoint the following named candidates to the office of director for the following terms:

- WILLY CUNHA – TERM ENDING 2027
- RAY SHADY – TERM ENDING 2025
- MATT TURRENTINE – TERM ENDING 2027

Item 7 - Request to approve appointments in-lieu of election to the Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District. Similarly to **Item 6** above, there were no challengers, which allows the District to petition the Board to reappoint incumbent members.

The District requests that the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, at a regular or special meeting held prior to November 27, 2023, appoint the following named candidates to the office of director for the term ending December, 2027:

- JERRY REAUGH and HERBERT ROWLAND III

Relative to **Items 6** and **7**, the Board could remove the item from the consent calendar, ask the candidates to attend the meeting, and interview them with regard to:

1. Their stance on banking of State water with in the Paso Basin.
2. The repeal of the planting ordinance and how they would facilitate allowing small users who are locked out by the Paso Basin Moratorium from obtaining a few acre feet more in the near term.
3. Compliance with LAFCO conditions relative to the formation of the El Pomar Water District.
4. Their stance on the Quiet Title Law Suit.
5. Their willingness to have their districts share in the short and long range costs contained in **Item 8**, immediately below.

Item 8 - Request to approve and authorize the Chairperson to sign a professional consultant services contract with Water Systems Consulting, Inc., in an amount not to exceed \$296,647, to perform a Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Blended Water Supply Project Water Supply Feasibility & Engineering Study. As the title states, this is a step to:

The subject of today’s action relates to a portion of Component 6, namely an engineering study (Study) to assess the feasibility of blending water supplies for agricultural use (other portions of Component 6 include an engineering study of the feasibility of using unallocated State Water Project water supply and other supplemental water supplies and an engineering study to identify and evaluate options to stabilize groundwater levels and address surface water depletion utilizing excess water supplies).

See the table below:

Components	Grant Amount
Component 1: Grant Administration	\$250,000
Component 2: City of Paso Robles Recycled Water Distribution System – Salinas River Segment	\$3,500,000
Component 3: San Miguel Community Service District Recycled Water Supply project	\$1,000,000
Component 4: Address GSP Data Gaps – High Priority	\$1,400,000
Component 5: High Priority Management Actions	\$800,000
Component 6: Supplemental Water Supply Feasibility/Engineering Studies	\$650,000
Total:	\$7,600,000

The entire package, including **Component 6**, is funded by a grant for which the County competed and won.

The costs associated with the Study are 100% reimbursable from the Round 1 Implementation Grant, which was awarded to the County in August 2022. Per the Grant Agreement, the County will appropriate the disbursement of up to \$650,000 of those grant funds for Component 6 work items, which will be eligible for reimbursement. These funds are already included in the FC 205 – Groundwater Sustainability Department’s FY 2023-24 budget, so no budget augmentation request is necessary.

It is likely that the El Pomar Water District and the Shandon Water District will be major beneficiaries of the project if it turns out to be feasible and is constructed. What will be their contribution? What about the City of Paso Robles?

Item 24 - County is rejoining the San Luis Obispo County Waste Management Authority (IWMA). The leftist Board majority got the steamroller going to have the County rejoin the IWMA. The Authority is a creature of environmental fetishism which culminated in the passage of AB 939 in 1989. The statute requires cities and counties to reduce the percentage of trash sent to landfills. The required percentage reduction has increased over the decades with some jurisdictions now approaching 100%. Simultaneously, the State made it almost impossible to expand or site new landfills. Along with this scheme came mandatory separation of recyclables, culminating this year with the requirement that citizens and businesses separate out wet trash (organics).

All of this has made the cost of refuse collection and disposal increase exponentially over the intervening decades. While spawning new patronage based industries and regulatory agencies, the actual amount of materials recycled has been negligible as the markets for them fluctuate. After several decades, China stopped importing much of the material, which now ends up in landfills anyway.

Landfills comprise a tiny amount of the state’s land area and are the most efficient way of disposing of solid waste. The entire effort has been costly symbolic virtue signaling, evocative of pyramid building.

In SLO County the IWMA was created to jointly administer the program for the cities and County. Over the years it became an ungoverned esoteric self-serving parasite promoting various recycling schemes and the lifestyle of a prior long term Executive Director. The County Supervisors and city representatives allowed it to decay. Eventually, Cal Cost News exposed the corruption. Meanwhile, the costs escalated and the uncontrolled Executive Director and leftist supervisors and city council members prohibited plastics, polyethylene, plastic bags, and anything else related to oil. Eventually, the Board took control and the original Executive Director escaped prosecution and retired. A secretary took the fall for some minor corruption. Big stuff like gift trucks to cronies and dumping of hazardous waste into landfills somehow escaped prosecution.

Tribute or Higher Costs: Eventually, the prior 3 member BOS majority withdrew the County from the agency in protest. The new left Board majority quickly commissioned a study to lay out the cost differences generated by the diminished economies of scale resulting from separate operations to justify the County rejoining. The IWMA has also peripherally promised to stop pushing extreme recycling schemes separately from the State. This places the conservative Supervisors in the awkward position of having to vote for rejoining or appearing to support higher costs.

Container Size	Monthly Rate ²	Current 2% Fee ³	Not Joining IWMA 8.1% Fee	Joining IWMA	
				Permanent 5.4% Fee	FY 2023-2024 Temporary Reduced
Typical Range for Residential Curbside Service Within County Solid Waste Jurisdiction					
32 Gallon	\$20 - \$50	\$0.30 - \$1.00	\$1.62 - \$4.05	\$1.08 - \$2.70	\$0.88 - \$2.20
64 Gallon	\$30 - \$70	\$0.30 - \$1.40	\$2.43 - \$5.67	\$1.62 - \$3.78	\$1.32 - \$3.08
96 Gallon	\$40 - \$80	\$0.30 - \$1.60	\$3.24 - \$6.48	\$2.16 - \$4.32	\$1.76 - \$3.52

If the County rejoins IWMA, revenues from Solid Waste Management Fees, Landfill Tipping Fee Surcharges, and General Fund contributions to the FC 335 – Solid Waste Management FY

2023-24 Budget will be eliminated. The proposed management fees will be collected by the County from the effective date until a transition date is determined for IWMA to proceed with fee collection and no further annual General Fund contributions will be necessary once the transition is complete.

Ultimate Resolution: Statewide Revolt. Similarly to **Proposition 13**, a citizens movement needs to be created and funded to end the whole charade statewide. On a date certain, Californians would be educated to revolt and cease separating their trash and recycling. This would bring the entire system to its knees and sew panic among the elected and appointed officials. The revolt would remain in place until **AB 939** and subsequent legislation is repealed and a return to a common sense system is restored.

- (1) Integrated Waste Management Act (AB 939);**
- (2) Mandatory Commercial Recycling (AB 341);**
- (3) Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling (AB 1826);**
- (4) Commercial Organics and Recycling Bins (AB 827); and**
- (5) Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction (SB 1383).**

MATTERS AFTER 1:30 PM

Item 28 - A request that the Board consider 1) Receiving an update of the status of Senate Bill 1090 (SB 1090) funds and provide direction to staff on how to proceed; 2) Approval of the SB 1090 spending plan, allowing for Board direction in the development of subsequent budgets; 3) Authorizing a budget adjustment appropriating \$813,920 of SB 1090 Proceeds-Affordable Housing Designation to Fund Center 290 for the El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) homeless shelter expansion project in Paso Robles, by 4/5 vote. After PG&E announced in 2016 that it would close the Diablo Power Plant in 2024-25, a complex agreement consisting of environmental advocates, PG&E's employee unions, San Luis Obispo County, and other local governments in SLO County was negotiated. It was called the Joint Proposal, which provides payments to the various groups to help offset the loss of jobs, loss of taxes, and negative economic impacts to the community.

The agreement is essentially chump change in terms of the loss of taxes and the negative economic impacts. The County is to receive \$85 million, as laid out below. This was then encoded into law via Senate Bill 1090.

The \$85 million Community Impact Mitigation Fund is broken into two parts:

- \$10 million for the Economic Development Fund
- \$75 million for the Essential Services Mitigation and Stabilization Fund (ESMSF)

This agenda item is a report to update the Board and community on the uses of the fund so far. The report is a hodgepodge of lists of past, current, and future expenditures by category. There does not seem to be a consolidated table that displays the full picture.

The design of the whole program missed a tremendous opportunity. What if, instead of beginning to spend pieces of the \$85 million in 2018 on pet projects, it had been invested for 10 years and left untouched.

Accumulation Schedule

Annual Schedule [Monthly Schedule](#)

Year	Deposit	Interest	Ending balance
1	\$85,000,000.00	\$5,950,000.00	\$90,950,000.00
2	\$0.00	\$6,366,500.00	\$97,316,500.00
3	\$0.00	\$6,812,155.00	\$104,128,655.00
4	\$0.00	\$7,289,005.85	\$111,417,660.85
5	\$0.00	\$7,799,236.26	\$119,216,897.11
6	\$0.00	\$8,345,182.80	\$127,562,079.91
7	\$0.00	\$8,929,345.59	\$136,491,425.50
8	\$0.00	\$9,554,399.79	\$146,045,825.29
9	\$0.00	\$10,223,207.77	\$156,269,033.06
10	\$0.00	\$10,938,832.31	\$167,207,865.37

At the end of the 10 years the County would have had \$167 million. At that point it could commit to only spend 50% per year of whatever interest it earned on the fund. At 5%, that would be half of \$8.36 million, or \$4.8 million the first year. The fund could keep growing forever. Ultimately this would grow into a huge endowment.¹

Even more powerfully, such a fund could have been reserved for capital investments. Instead, it will all be gone in a few years.

COLAB proposed this plan back in 2018 and was ignored.

Economic Development:

Insofar as this category is concerned, the table below displays the expenditures too far.

See the table o the next page:

¹ Note - the County did not receive the entire \$85 million in one payment. It is still being paid over 7 years. However, the County could have lent itself the money to invest from idle funds backed up by SB 1090 payments.

SB 1090 Proceeds – Economic Development Designation - \$3,990,000

This reserve designation holds funding that is intended to finance one-time Economic Development related projects.

SB 1090 Economic Development		
Total Revenue Received	\$	3,517,500
Expenditures		Expenditure Purpose
FY 2018-19	\$	300,000 Central Coast Jobs Roadmap
FY 2020-21	\$	300,000 REACH
FY 2020-21	\$	500,000 Cuesta College/ACI Jet Program
FY 2020-21	\$	200,000 SLO Partners - Modern Entrepreneurs Opportunities
FY 2020-21	\$	5,000 Oceano Dunes Economic Impact Assessment
FY 2021-22	\$	25,000 Broadband Strategic Plan
FY 2021-22	\$	400,000 REACH
FY 2021-22	\$	184,004 1.0 FTE Principal Administrative Analyst
FY 2021-22	\$	75,000 SLO Chamber Family Friendly Workplace
FY 2022-23	\$	202,567 1.0 FTE Principal Administrative Analyst
FY 2023-24	\$	300,000 REACH
FY 2022-23 & FY 2023-24	\$	150,000 SLO Chamber Family Friendly Workplace
FY 2023-24	\$	215,349 1.0 FTE Principal Administrative Analyst
Total Expenditures	\$	2,856,920
Current Balance	\$	660,580
Revenue Receivable		
FY 2023-24	\$	236,250
FY 2024-25	\$	236,250
Total Revenue Receivable	\$	472,500
Total Balance	\$	1,133,080

It is not clear how this will relate to the balance of the \$10 million earmarked for economic development.

Item 29 - It is recommended that the Board receive and file this report regarding the County’s Fiscal Year 2024-25 and Multi Year financial forecast. The item presents a detailed and well documented comprehensive Budget forecast for FY 2024-25 and a projection for the two subsequent fiscal years, FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27. Also presented is a general strategy for closing the impending gaps. The strategy prioritizes public safety. The summary states in part:

Overall, the County’s budget continues to be in an increasingly precarious position, due to its projected rate of spending outpacing its revenues. Given this, continued compliance with the Board-adopted Budget Goals and Policies and Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches will be important to addressing expected budget gaps to meet our legal requirements to adopt balanced budget each year and assuring the ongoing fiscal health of the County. Fortunately, the County has historically taken a conservative approach to budgeting, routinely budgeting a contingency, and maintaining adequate reserve levels. These practices will serve the County well in the coming years.

The future year projections are carefully constructed and present alternative scenarios about deficits that could occur based on salary increases, national and state economic impacts (recession), and adding more staff.

One Year Projection:

All Government Funds - excludes the various utilities and dependent special districts that are theoretically self-supporting

Revenues:

Financing Source Category	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Forecast	\$ Diff	% Diff
Fund Balance Available (FBA)	\$50,786,248	\$42,508,752	-\$8,277,497	-16.30%
Non-Departmental Revenue	\$274,603,870	\$287,383,801	\$12,779,931	4.65%
Departmental Revenue	\$374,526,742	\$379,796,860	\$5,270,118	1.41%
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$699,916,860	\$709,689,413	\$9,772,553	1.40%
Cancelled Reserves	\$13,801,521	\$1,059,126	-\$12,742,395	-92.33%
Total Financing Sources	\$713,718,381	\$710,748,539	-\$2,969,843	-0.42%

Expenditures:

Expenditure Category	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Forecast	\$ Diff	% Diff
Salaries and Benefits	\$386,506,118	\$396,289,499	\$9,783,381	2.53%
Non-Salaries	\$283,095,438	\$294,828,317	\$11,732,879	4.14%
Contingencies	\$33,499,242	\$34,555,891	\$1,056,649	3.15%
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$703,100,798	\$725,673,707	\$22,572,909	3.21%
New Reserves	\$10,617,583	\$5,212,398	-\$5,405,185	-50.91%
Total Expenditures	\$713,718,381	\$730,886,105	\$17,167,724	2.41%

Gap:

Per the assumptions noted above, the forecasted budget for the General Fund for FY 2024-25 is:

\$710,748,539	Total financing sources (revenues)
\$730,886,105	Total financing uses (expenditures)
(\$20,137,566)	Total forecast surplus/(gap)

Non-Departmental Revenues - These revenues are not restricted to specific purposes. The Board has the most discretion over their use. Accordingly, they largely support public safety, support departments such as County Council, CAO, Human Resources, Auditor Controller, etc., and local matches on State and Federal programs.

The table below outlines the assumptions for the FY 2024-25 forecast for non-departmental revenue:

Revenue	2021-22 Actual	2022-223 Actual	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Forecast	\$ Diff: 23-24 Bud & 24-25 Forecast	% Diff: 23-24 Bud & 24-25 Forecast
Secured Prop Tax	\$137,463,005	\$147,139,887	\$153,906,156	\$161,663,741	\$7,757,585	5.0%
Unitary Tax	\$4,920,304	\$4,523,249	\$4,425,948	\$4,023,479	-\$402,469	-9.1%
Supplemental Prop Tax	\$3,298,724	\$4,809,193	\$2,345,990	\$4,001,248	\$1,655,258	70.6%
Prop Tax in lieu of VLF	\$42,715,055	\$45,635,993	\$47,461,433	\$50,420,090	\$2,958,657	6.2%
Prop Transfer Tax	\$4,456,223	\$3,165,487	\$4,080,000	\$3,544,500	-\$535,500	-13.1%
Sales Tax	\$16,148,516	\$15,408,856	\$16,500,000	\$16,500,000	\$0	0.0%
TOT	\$17,151,646	\$16,547,954	\$18,375,000	\$17,416,211	-\$958,789	-5.2%
All Other	\$25,267,209	\$43,774,131	\$27,509,343	\$29,814,532	\$2,305,189	8.4%
Total (Non-Dept. Rev.)	\$251,420,682	\$281,004,749	\$274,603,870	\$287,383,801	\$12,779,931	4.7%

The 3 Year Projection - As noted at the beginning of this section, the gap amounts depend on the assumptions about staffing levels, raises, and the economy.

Baseline

As noted, as a baseline for this multi-year forecast, revenues and expenses from the detailed financial forecast already presented to your Board were projected into two additional years using the assumptions already described. Next year's detailed forecast suggests a deficit of approximately \$20.1 million, with a range that reflects existing uncertainties. Assuming a Status Quo General Fund (GF) budget in subsequent years, the GF will continue a deficit that will continue throughout FY 2026-27 without reducing expenditures.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$730,886,105	\$748,367,648	\$766,426,860
Surplus/Deficit	-\$20,137,566	-\$15,274,402	-\$10,218,587

Annual Salary Increases of 1%

Annual salary increases of 1% result in a GF budget that is more negative (deficit) than the baseline beginning in FY 2025-26, continuing to be negative (deficit) in FY 2026-27. It is worth noting that because of the manner in which salary increases currently being negotiated were handled in the Baseline forecast, no additional increases were included for FY 2024-25. Instead, the 1% increase was assumed to be added starting in FY 2025-26.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$730,886,105	\$752,372,946	\$769,351,253
Surplus/Deficit	-\$20,137,566	-\$19,279,700	-\$13,142,980

Annual CPI (4.0%) Salary Increases

Increasing salaries on an annual basis at a rate equivalent to the calculated CPI (4.0%) results in a negative budget (budget gap) throughout the multi-year forecast horizon. Assuming the FY 2024-25 deficit (budget gap) is closed, FY 2025-26 would continue a significant deficit of approximately \$31.3 million and \$43.3 million in FY 2026-27. The same assumptions applied in the 1% Annual Salary increase scenario regarding timing of increases was applied to this scenario as well. Increasing salaries without reducing expenses will not be feasible.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$730,886,105	\$764,388,840	\$799,459,802
Surplus/Deficit	-\$20,137,566	-\$31,295,594	-\$43,251,529

Adding Positions

As noted in the Assumptions section, the County has added an average of 22 GF positions over the past 5 years. As shown below, the GF budget remains in negative territory throughout FY 2026-27 should positions be added at this rate per year beginning in FY 2024-25.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$734,177,598	\$751,659,140	\$791,593,625
Surplus/Deficit	-\$23,429,059	-\$18,565,895	-\$13,510,080

Adding Positions

As noted in the Assumptions section, the County has added an average of 22 GF positions over the past 5 years. As shown below, the GF budget remains in negative territory throughout FY 2026-27 should positions be added at this rate per year beginning in FY 2024-25.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$734,177,598	\$751,659,140	\$791,593,625
Surplus/Deficit	-\$23,429,059	-\$18,565,895	-\$13,510,080

Since these factors do not occur in isolation, various combinations could result in a more severe gap.

Other than the retention of Diablo, the report does not speculate on the potential of generating more revenue through major economic development, such as:

- **Adding units to Diablo and replacing the existing units.**
- **Offshore wind**
- **Development of 5 Star destination resorts – Including, God forbid, the Lone Madrone Ritz Carlton tucked in the valley up behind the traffic circle.**
- **Oil development**
- **Para mutual horse racing – Like Keeneland in Kentucky**
- **Major Google site – they are looking to site a new 1.5 million sq. facility in Ca.**



Item 30 - Any Supervisor may ask a question for clarification, make an announcement, or report briefly on his or her activities. In addition, Supervisors may request staff to report back to the Board at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter or may request that staff place a matter of business on a future agenda. Any request to place a matter of business for consideration on a future agenda requires the majority vote of the Board. This is now a standing item at the end of each Board Meeting. It would be better to set it after General Public Comment, when more of the public is in attendance.

Added Consent Item 32 - Submittal of Board of Supervisors statements condemning the violent attacks in Israel. Now it's worse. During the Board meeting of October 17, 2023, the leftist Board majority refused to join Supervisors Peschong and Arnold in adopting a Resolution condemning Hamas and supporting Israel. Instead, the majority determined to have the members separately offer their comments. These were then distributed as a news release by the County Administrative Office at public expense. COLAB immediately pointed out that the three leftist Supervisors resorted to immoral equivalence for the blame and responsibility.

That analysis is displayed below under **Background** below.

In the meantime, it has become ever more clear that the genocide and expanding war is not a narrow terrorist act of an aberrant group. In fact the attack, if not specifically authorized and encouraged by Iran, was deeply supported by Iran and some other gulf states through the supplying of weapons (including cruise missiles), intelligence, ammunition, training, transportation, and logistical supplies. In fact, Iran has now endorsed the attack, doubled down on its policy of the destruction of Israel, and excoriated the United States as a culprit and target. Despicably, a number of academics the United States, their brainwashed students, and even some elected officials have condemned Israel and supported Hamas.

What will it take for the 3 leftist Supervisors to wake up and unequivocally back both Israel and the United State in a forthright Resolution that does not propagate the current shared blame lie for the attack with Israel?

Background:

After general public comment, Supervisor Peschong requested that a Resolution condemning Hamas and supporting Israel be prepared and brought forward for discussion and a vote. Supervisor Arnold seconded the motion. Supervisors Gibson, Ortiz-Legg, and Paulding all objected for various reasons.

Supervisor Paulding argued against the proposed resolution, falsely rationalizing that the “situation is fluid and that a Resolution may not be timely in two weeks.” Instead of a Resolution, Paulding suggested the supervisors independently write their own statements, which staff could post on the county website. Ortiz-Legg voiced concerns that a resolution could be misconstrued and potentially inflame tensions. The board voted 3-2 against a resolution supporting Israel.

Resolutions are often used when specific findings are made by the Board of Supervisors. A Board order is usually a directive from the Board of Supervisors to its subordinate county officers. An ordinance is a local law adopted with all the legal formality of a statute.

Paulding offered a motion, which passed, for Supervisors to prepare their own statements instead. This was a cop out by the Board left majority, as an agendaized Resolution would have been a much more solid and forceful commitment on behalf of the people of San Luis Obispo County.

The California State Association of Counties’ advice on the subject of Resolutions states in part:

Legislative Role

As the legislative body of the county, the Board of Supervisors may act by resolution, by board order, or by ordinance. A resolution of a Board is ordinarily not equivalent to an ordinance; it is usually a declaration about future purposes or proceedings of the Board or a policy statement by the Board. Resolutions are often used when specific findings are made by the Board of Supervisors. A board order is usually a directive from the Board of Supervisors to its subordinate county officers.

Why wouldn’t the Board want a policy statement with findings and formal force? Instead, the Supervisors individual statements were posted on the County website home page. These are copied below with our annotated comments on the absolute failure and betrayal inherent in some of them.

Board of Supervisors Condemn Violent Attacks on Israel

Author: Administrative Office

Date: 10/18/2023 4:45:38 PM

Share this

The Board of Supervisors make statements on the attacks in Israel

At the Board of Supervisors Meeting held on October 17, 2023, those who spoke during public comment asked the Board of Supervisors to issue a proclamation condemning the attacks on October 7th that have killed more than 1,400 people in Israel, including children, while also injuring 3,400 individuals.

The Board voted unanimously to provide comments on the recent events that have transpired in the Middle East. The Supervisors have made the following statements:

Peschong was still thinking of the Resolution and the need for the whole Board to act in concert.

I stand with Israel. The coordinated terrorist attacks on October 7th saw the murder of innocent civilians and the kidnapping of women and children. We all should be willing to condemn these attacks. They are wrong and violate international law.” - Supervisor John Peschong. District 1

Bruce Gibson made a clear and unequivocal statement in his first paragraph. It would have made a great first finding clause in in a County Resolution

“The horrifying slaughter and hostage-taking in Israel perpetrated by Hamas terrorists earlier this month is depraved in its inhumanity and is the essence of evil. I condemn these atrocities unconditionally. I stand with Israel and the Jewish people worldwide in support of an appropriate response to this criminal barbarity.

He then undermined his credibility with the next paragraph. Here he appeals to the radical left support on the destruction of Israel by submitting to the immoral equivalency that that Israel and Hamas are equally guilty. Yes, innocent Palestinians will die, but the fault lies not with Israel, but with Hamas, who uses their people as human shields.

Everyone personally involved in this chaotic, unstable and perilous situation should work with a clear moral imperative to restore peace in the region as soon as possible. Those pursuing a military response must be precise in its goals and prosecution. They must also be accountable for the inherent moral danger that innocent civilian lives – Israeli and Palestinian – most certainly will be lost. Let us fervently hope that reason and restraint can prevail as those involved seek a just future.” - Supervisor Bruce Gibson. District 2

Like the World Trade Center?

If Hamas, North Korea, or anyone else for that matter detonates a nuclear weapon at LAX, how much restraint should we exercise on their territory and populations?

Ortiz – Legg’s statement is simply an effort to court her extreme left leaning supporters who seek the destruction of Israel She adds a history lesson. At the end of World War I, the victorious allies sought to restore the Jewish people to their ancient homeland and allow them to emigrate from Eastern Europe where they had been persecuted for centuries. Does the Supervisor support the survival of the State of Israel or not? Notwithstanding the Balfour declaration and the displacement of the Palestinian people, a century ago, should their descendants be allowed to repeatedly commit genocide against the Israelis? Should Mexico be allowed to reconquer the southwestern United States? Would it be OK for their army to kill and maim American citizens in the name of recovering their previous territory? Ortiz-Legg states in part:

“My heart goes out to all those affected by the ongoing conflict in the region. Recent events initiated by the actions of Hamas have reopened deep wounds and inflicted pain on both sides. Families have been torn apart, and the impact is felt not only by the citizens of Israel but also by the displaced Palestinians. The loss of innocent lives and any acts that cause harm to civilians are violations of International Law, a sentiment echoed by many world leaders throughout history, including President Harry S. Truman, who in 1947 noted that "Palestine is undoubtedly one of the most difficult problems faced by the world at this present time." The historical displacement of Palestinians from their land has created a complex and longstanding issue, contributing to the challenges faced by innocent Israelis as well. It is essential to recognize the multifaceted nature of the problem and strive for a peaceful resolution that acknowledges the rights and concerns of all parties involved.” - Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg. District 3

More immoral equivalence: Ortiz-Legg has bought into the radical left doctrine that Palestinian violence is an effort toward DE colonialization. They sympathize with Palestine as

part of a broader commitment to the principle of decolonization. For them, moral authority does not arise from just ends pursued through just means, but resides entirely in tribal identity. Describing a conflict as a form of “decolonization” is a blank check in the left’s moral universe.

Paulding’s statement is also an outrageous appeal to immoral equivalence, which puts equal blame on both the Israel and Hamas for the attack. If the attacks, are as he says, “Inhumane, barbaric and unconscionable,” why does he resort to obfuscatory word salad, hoping that “an appropriate response can be effected so that peace can be restored in this region...” Does he not believe that Hamas should be destroyed forever? What about the murders of thousands? What about the hostages? What about Israel’s right to secure borders? What a vacuous and gutless comment.

Compounding his intellectual flatulence, is his lecture to “we neighbors and Americans” to be good neighbors to our Jewish and Muslim friends.

“The historic Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel that started October 7 are inhumane, barbaric, unconscionable, and I condemn them unconditionally. It is my hope that with US support to Israel, an appropriate response can be effected so that peace can be restored in this region and continued mass casualties can be avoided. Here, at home, we can focus the conversation on human rights – the fact that every human life is important, and that innocent civilians whether Israeli or Palestinian should never be the target of military warfare. And we can encourage our fellow neighbors and Americans to be good neighbors to our Jewish and Muslim friends, and lift each other up and support each other through this increasingly divisive, tragic and chaotic time in history. It is more important than ever that we continue to promote human decency and respect for one another in our community and our country, and seek to unify against terrorism, division, and hate instead of allowing these things to further divide us.” - Supervisor Jimmy Paulding. District 4



What does Paulding say about pro Hamas demonstrations? Democrat Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez dressed up for the occasion. Any means necessary.

Arnold almost got it right – She supports **Israel’s right to defend itself**. Actually she should support Israel’s right and duty to eliminate Hamas from the Gaza strip forever.

“I whole heartedly support Israel’s right to defend itself after their country was horrifically attacked.” - Supervisor Debbie Arnold. District 5

What do the Board members think about Hamas using the hospitals as command centers?

Anti-Israel Lies Will Ramp Up With the Ground War

By **Seth Mandel**

Israel’s awaited ground invasion of Gaza appears to be in motion. The IDF announced the expansion of the war effort would begin late Friday, three weeks after Hamas infiltrated Israel and killed more than 1,400 people and took another 200-plus hostage. It was the worst attack on Israeli soil in its history and touched off a global campaign of violence against Jews. It was also carried out in the most gruesome manner possible. A meaningful Israeli response was necessary, and an IDF victory is vital to the restoration of not just Israeli morale and deterrence but that of the free West.

A ground war will put Gazan hospitals at the center of attention because, as Jonathan Schanzer explained in detail, Hamas uses some of them, such as Al Shifa, as major command centers. Media, NGOs, and politicians will call for Israel to resupply hospital compounds, especially with fuel. This essentially means there will be public pressure to pause hostilities in order to supply Hamas’s military command centers and bases while Israel is attempting to subdue them. These calls are disingenuous and the people making them often know that. It’s crucial to point this out as more Israeli troops head into Gaza.

LAST WEEK’S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, October 24, 2023 (Not Scheduled)

Planning Commission Meeting of Monday, October 23 and Tuesday, October 24, 2023 (Completed)

Item 1 - Hearing to consider a request by Dana Reserve, LLC and NKT Development, LLC for the adoption of the Dana Reserve Specific Plan (DRSP), a Vesting Tentative Tract Map (Tract 3159), and Conditional Use Permit for Oak Tree Removal and Grading/Impervious Surfaces. The Dana Reserve Specific Plan would allow for the phased development of a 288-acre master-planned community with up to 1,318 residential units, 110,000-203,000 square feet of commercial and non-residential (Visitor Serving/Hotel, Education) uses, a minimum of 63 acres of open space and recreation, and related circulation and infrastructure. The project also includes a County-initiated General Plan and Ordinance Amendment to change the land use categories within the specific plan area and to incorporate the property into the Nipomo Urban Reserve Line (URL), and to ensure the General Plan is consistent with the DRSP. The project would require annexation into the Nipomo Community Services District service area to facilitate the provision of water and wastewater services to the project. The project would result in site disturbance over

the majority of the 288-acre project site. Specific earthwork quantities are unknown; however, excess earthwork material from earlier phases of the project (Phases 1 and 2) would be used as fill material for later phases (Phase 3) to balance earthwork on-site to the greatest extent practicable. The project site is located in the Residential Rural land use category, west of U.S. 101, east of Hetrick Avenue, and adjacent to the Nipomo URL. The project is located within the South County Inland Sub Area of the South County Planning Area.

The full plan can be accessed at the link:

https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Planning-Building/Forms-Documents/Planning-Projects/Dana-Reserve-Specific-Plan/Final-Environmental-Impact-Report/Appendices/Appendix-A_Dana-R

The Commission approved recommending the project to the Board of Supervisors 4/1, with Gibson's Commissioner, Anne R. Wyatt, voting no. The hearing filled all of the first day and about 2/3rds of the second day. Some Commissioners were distracted by details in the CEQA analysis; however, Chair Kristine Simpson-Spearman was able to bring them back and to ultimately focus on the planning issues, especially housing and the 288-acre site's insignificant environmental impacts in a 3,500 sq. mile county.

The project is well designed and will provide a variety of homes in a defined village center.

Background: There was actually only one question for the Planning Commission: Would it recommend the largest housing plan proposed in the unincorporated County in decades? The Planning Commission does not have approval authority over Specific Plan applications² but may recommend them for approval or denial to the Board of Supervisors, which has the final authority. The Commission's recommendation will have weight in the Board of Supervisors' ultimate decision.

The two-day hearing was a long wrangle, as the neighbors in the surrounding areas are opposed to the project. This is natural, as some of them have pastoral views of oak trees and cattle on the site at no cost to themselves or the public in general. The change to a multi-density subdivision with 1240 new homes and some commercial space is always disappointing to long existing neighbors of any project. However, as communities grow and more people move to an area, change naturally must occur unless the city or county determine to ban growth. This is not possible under State law in California, due to housing and equity requirements that have expanded over recent decades and especially in the last few years.

The Project:

² Specific Plans are a special type of zoning permit under which the actual project design becomes the zoning.

Table 2.1: Land Use Summary

Land Use	Acres	Density Range	Potential Units	Potential Square Feet ²
RESIDENTIAL				
Residential Single-Family-1 (DR-SF1)	130.8 ¹	4 - 7 du/ac	707	
Residential Single-Family-2 (DR-SF2)	15.3 ¹	11 - 13 du/ac	124	
Residential Multi-Family (DR-MF)	24.2 ¹	18-24 du/ac	487	
Recreation (DR-REC) • Neighborhood Park (7 ac) • Equestrian Staging (1 ac)	8 ⁵			
Pocket Parks ³	-			
Primary Roads	22			
Residential Rural (RR) – Existing ⁶	10			
SUBTOTAL	210.3		1,318	
COMMERCIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL				
Village and Flex Commercial Visitor Serving / Hotel Education	22.3 ¹			113k sf 60k sf 30k sf
Internal Neighborhood Roads ³	-			
Park and Ride ⁴	-			
SUBTOTAL	22.3			203k sf
OPEN SPACE/RECREATION				
Open Space (DR-OS) ○ Open Space ○ Trails ○ Basins	54.9 ⁵			
SUBTOTAL	54.9			
TOTAL	288.0		1,318	110-203k sf
<i>Notes:</i>				
¹ All acreage and potential units can be adjusted up to 10% to address site specific constraints and more suitable site design, subject to County review.				
² k indicates thousand.				
³ Internal Neighborhood Roads and Pocket Park acreage located within Residential Single-Family land use acreage calculation.				
⁴ Park and Ride acreage located within Public Collector Roads.				
⁵ Minimum Requirement.				
⁶ Includes approximately 2-acre fire station and a potential 1-acre public safety facility.				

The Context:

People often move to counties such as San Luis Obispo County, that are not next to or part of a large metropolitan area, in the hope of enjoying a more rural ambiance while retaining urban conveniences. Some of the most popular counties are not in remote rural states, but are separated from a major urban area by one or two suburban counties. Thus the residents enjoy country amenities but can access major retail centers, cultural institutions, airports, and job centers within a few hours. San Luis Obispo County, situated between LA and the SF Bay Area, is a classic example. These types of counties are often characterized as “tipping point counties,” as the very semi-rural amenities that make them attractive also beckon new residents, particularly the retired affluent and independently wealthy who are not job slaves.

The Dana Reserve Project is an attempt to implement the village center concept that concentrates density, preserves agriculture, and provides a hard urban growth boundary. Previous arrivals who

live in the area naturally object. Of course, their own suburban homes once replaced what was previously agricultural or open space land.

DANA RESERVE

Exhibit 2-2a: Concept Master Plan



The opponents of the project attempted to use six CEQA Class I Unmitigable Impacts to kill it. The Sierra Club is among the opponents. Of course, most of their members are environmental Brahmins who already live in nice, free-standing suburban homes. The table below displays the CEQA impacts. CEQA and these findings are simply the systematic exploitation of the obvious. If new development takes place, there will be more population, more CO₂, more water use, more cars, etc. The real question is whether we will allow people to have nice homes in which raise their families. The opposition in this case is selfish and undermines the ability of younger people to find homes and jobs.

CHAPTER 4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ANALYSIS

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential environmental effects that would result from construction, operation, and maintenance of the Dana Reserve Specific Plan (DRSP; project) and identifies mitigation measures for impacts found to be potentially significant.

Table 4-1. Summary of Environmental Impacts Analysis

Environmental Resource	Significant, Unavoidable Adverse Impacts	Significant, but Mitigable Impacts	Less than Significant Impacts
Aesthetics		X	
Agriculture and Forestry Resources		X	
Air Quality	X		
Biological Resources	X		
Cultural Resources		X	
Energy		X	
Geology and Soils		X	
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	X		
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		X	
Hydrology and Water Quality		X	
Land Use and Planning	X		
Mineral Resources			X
Noise		X	
Population and Housing	X		
Public Services		X	
Recreation		X	
Transportation	X		
Tribal Cultural Resources		X	
Utilities and Service Systems		X	
Wildfire		X	

The large Economic Development nonprofit REACH has come out obliquely in favor of the project. Rather than specifically supporting it, they identify it as one of a number of pending projects “which are promising.” Their Board of Directors contains leaders of most of the large and prestigious firms and institutions within the central coast region. Most other economic development, realtor, and business organizations do not appear in the written record at this time.



WE ALL KNOW WE HAVE A HOUSING PROBLEM. LET'S GET TO WORK.

An urgent call to approve and move on the housing our families, workforce, and economy desperately need

SLO County Supervisors, Mayors, Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners, and all interested in creating more opportunities for housing:

SLO County's persistent housing shortage has become a fundamental threat to our community's livelihood. Businesses can't hire, workers can't afford to live here, and our economy can't sustain our way of life.

As members of the housing advocacy team and partners that supported development of the new Housing and Infrastructure Regional Framework, we believe that swift leadership to create more housing is an economic imperative.

We applaud the regional coordination of SLOCOG, the County and the seven cities in developing new strategies and tools to counteract the overwhelming challenges we face — and we urge you to take action now to approve and move forward on housing of all types and in all stages of development.

PROMISING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AS DETERMINED BY EXTENSIVE PLANNING AMONG THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES



This map illustrates potential projects in SLO County where planning allows for over 200 units at the time of this letter. It is not all inclusive and is not meant to represent the totality of possible projects nor their timetables. Further information about projects can be seen below under the details of the Regional Housing Framework.

Decades of inaction have compounded the housing shortage and thwarted our ability to grow and thrive. As we look at our region's project pipeline it is essential that we resist the tendency to delay or deny the housing we need.

We must work urgently at every stage to build the homes and neighborhoods that our teachers, public servants, service workers, nurses and doctors, small business owners and

beyond desperately need — moving projects through the planning pipeline more quickly and approving them without delay. Not in 2 years. Not in 5 years. Today.

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, October 26, 2023 (Completed)

In General – the meeting agenda contains a number of requests for permit extensions – more time to get projects going before the permits expire. There are also several requests to adjust permits for solid waste recycling operations. There are no major land use policy questions.

The extensions were granted and the modifications to the entrance of the Cold Canyon Landfill were approved. A correction of the calculation for volumes at a north county recycling operation was also approved.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - Test Scores Are Plummeting Despite California Spending Wildly on Education – Excerpt.

State officials seem to delight in how much money they "invest" in different priorities, without worrying too much about outcomes. **By STEVEN GREENHUT - 10.27.2023**

"The revised budget directs a total of \$128.3 billion to education, lifts up the most critical needs including historic funding for school mental health, recruitment and retention of teachers," boasted Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, following last year's budget deal.

The state spends nearly \$24,000 per student a year (including funding from all sources, including the feds). Consider the educational opportunities we would have if parents could spend that much money on private schools, which would compete for tuition. Each class of 25 students would have a budget of \$600,000. The governor likes to blather about a re-imagined school system, but in a competitive system we wouldn't have to just imagine it.

By contrast, let's look at what we've actually accomplished after a decade of steadily increasing expenditures. The Public Policy Institute of California reported last year that "pandemic disruptions reversed nearly six years of academic progress." It found only 35 percent of low-income students met the state's English-language standards and only 21 percent met California's math proficiency standards. These are horrifying numbers.

Here's some other news: *EdSource* reports that nearly a third of the state's public school students are chronically absent. The Independent Institute reports that fewer than half of the state's students are functioning at their grade level and that 70 percent of incarcerated Californians lack even a high school diploma. There might be a connection between those dismal statistics.

But no matter how much the state "invests" in education, it's never enough for the public school establishment. The California Teachers' Association complains that California's per-student school funding lags behind other states—and it, of course, blames 1978's tax-limiting

Proposition 13 for the problem and bemoans "our faulty tax structure, which is currently benefiting the wealthiest corporations over Californians themselves."

See the full article at the link:

[Test Scores Are Plummeting Despite California Spending Wildly on Education \(reason.com\)](#)

Item 2 - California Loses Another 817,000 Residents in 2022 to Other States

High taxes and high cost of living cited as primary reasons

By [Katy Grimes](#), October 27, 2023 8

In 2022, 817,000 Californians moved to other states.

“The nation’s exemplar of liberal governance continued to shed residents at a dizzying pace in 2022, with 817,000 Golden Staters moving to other states — including 150,000 to red regions like Texas and Florida, [according to Census figures](#) released last week,” the New York Post [reported](#) this week.

The 2020 United States Census reported that San Francisco had a population of 815,201, so it’s as if the entire City by the Bay departed the state – which may end up happening.

California also lost a net of 407,000 residents to other states between July 2021 and July 2022, including a greater share of those with a college degree and residents at all income levels than in the past.

High taxes, high cost of living – highest-in-the-nation housing costs, highest-in-the-nation gas prices, failing public schools, and loss of parental rights – all factor in the decision to move.

The departure of Californians is more of an emergency evacuation, and it’s only getting worse.

The Globe ran a series in 2021 called “[Leaving California](#),” with interviews of some of the people who took their businesses and families to other states.

Some left during Governor Newsome’s draconian lockdowns. Others did not survive... [One business owner](#) in Sacramento told the Globe, “City Councilwoman Katie Valenzuela doesn’t realize just what the entrepreneurs have to do to keep it together,” especially in the face of the governor’s lockdowns, draconian local and state regulations, the anti-police movement, and the City Council and Mayor, totally ineffective in dealing with the homeless, he [explained](#).

Others left over the obvious quality of life issues: terrible public schools, high taxes that obviously do not go to maintain the state’s infrastructure, the homeless explosion, high crime, the blatant culture war in California, where Californians have to be exceedingly careful in their daily speech. “We are being targeted and made to feel uncomfortable. It’s the intimidation factor,” a business owner said.

[Another](#) business owner told the Globe, “I did not want to leave California at all. The state changed. California is not very tolerant of any other opinion these days. And if you make money, you are ‘evil’ in California.”

Tired of struggling to pay hefty income taxes on his Limited Liability Corporation in California, where business income in a LLC is taxed as personal income unless the owner files incorporation papers, “Quarterly taxes were always on my mind,” the business owner said. “The 37 percent tax to the feds and 13 percent to the state was daunting.” And he said his employees struggled as well. “Our lower level employees were always one paycheck away from not making a car payment or the rent,” he added. “It’s just too expensive to live in California.”

The [Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research](#) just released a [new policy brief](#) on California’s exodus – they call it “California’s population drain.” The Stanford policy study draws on an original survey of residents in California, Arizona and Texas.

Here are their key takeaways:

- California is losing population to Arizona and Texas at higher levels than ever before, including a greater share of college graduates and residents at all income levels.
- Two-thirds of those who moved said that politics was not a factor in their decision, but the population loss has political consequences: California lost a congressional seat after the 2020 census.
- California’s high cost of living has spurred many businesses and residents to leave the state, posing serious consequences for the state’s job market and fiscal outlook.
- California’s environmental policies and mandates could fuel the economic and political exodus to more lenient states like Arizona and Texas.

“This policy brief examines the reasons why people said they were moving out of California, what role politics and policy played, and what implications these trends have for sustainable growth in the state.”

The policy brief [reports](#) the data reveal quite a bit of movement in recent years. Six percent moved within the last year and 14 percent within the last two to five years. Individuals under the age of 45 and over 64 plus Black residents make up a higher proportion of recent movers.

Why do people leave California?

The reasons can be divided into the categories of:

1. the clearly personal,
2. the heavily partisan, and
3. socio-economic conditions.

Personal reasons include:

1. considerations such as weather or lifestyle preferences,
2. the need to move closer to or away from family, or
3. accepting or losing a job.

California residents consider moving due to housing costs alone.

High crime is a factor for the mass migration. While the policy brief reports California and Texas have virtually the same violent crime rates (ranking 17th and 16th among all states) and Arizona had a higher rate in 2020 (ranking 6th), people moving to Texas or Arizona have reported to the Globe they believe crime will at least be prosecuted in other states.

Most Californians leave for economic reasons. “Texas prioritizes population and economic growth to a greater degree whereas California has more wealth and social services. Texas has no state income tax, maintains itself as an energy island cut off from the Western Interconnection bulk electric system, and has more people without health insurance,” Stanford reports.

The possibility of more economic and political sorting in the future is real, the report says. Many Californians don’t see California’s high taxes and poor public services getting any better anytime soon.

The study claims Climate Change is a factor in the decision to leave California:

“California has staked out aggressive goals related to greening the energy grid and Texas remains firmly committed to producing and selling its oil and gas. Nonetheless, more than 70 percent of residents in all three states support subsidies for solar and more than 60 percent support them for wind. And majorities in all three states believe that human activity has contributed to global warming while only 9 percent do not believe that global warming is happening.” Egad.

Another former California resident who moved to North Carolina said there was an interesting bonus from her move: in addition to really good gas prices, she said, “We have parking lots here! They expect you to drive to the store and park in front,” unlike California which is trying to force people out of their cars and onto public transportation.

The Stanford study concludes, “Politically, California and Texas represent the ends of the current liberal-conservative ideological spectrum. There was a time when California — like Texas today — adopted an aggressive pro-growth posture under former Gov. Pat Brown” – Gov. Jerry Brown’s father.

They kindly say former Gov. Jerry Brown “articulated a more sustainable and environmentally friendly path,” failing to identify his draconian leftist policies. And those leftist policies have served to tear down and overshadow the policies of his father and more conservative, pro-growth governors. California felt freer, was business friendly, pro-growth when Ronald Reagan, George Deukmejian and Pete Wilson were governor. California was still a happy place to live – until Jerry Brown was elected and served 1975 – 1983 and again in 2011 – 2019, whose policies began, and continue the state’s decline.

Apparently 817,000 former Californians agree. The study concludes, “the high cost of housing and living in California has contributed to the decision by many businesses and residents to leave the state. And if enough companies were to leave and not be replaced adequately, it could have serious consequences for the state’s job and fiscal situations.”

Katy Grimes, the Editor in Chief 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?

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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

DRIVING DOWN THE GOLDEN STATE

CALIFORNIA'S AIR RESOURCES BOARD'S DRACONIAN REDUCTIONS IN HOW MANY MILES EACH RESIDENT TRAVELS BY CAR EACH YEAR CLASHES WITH HIGHWAY SAFETY IN THE REAL WORLD

BY JENNIFER HERNANDEZ

Earlier this year, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) announced its goal of reducing state residents' vehicle miles traveled (VMT), [even using zero-emission electric or autonomous vehicles, by 25 percent in 2030 and 30 percent in 2045](#). Despite CARB's earlier, more modest targets, per capita VMT [rose by 15 percent](#), to [8,561 miles](#) per year from 2009 to 2019. In 2020,

pandemic lockdowns and [high unemployment](#) slashed per capita [VMT by 1,111](#) miles, but vehicle use recovered when the state reopened. CARB’s new target means that the state will pursue a [2,137-mile](#) per capita VMT decline over the next six years, reaching a [2,573-mile](#) decline by 2045—more than double the temporary 2020 decline in VMT.

No one knows how California can achieve two and a half pandemics’ worth of VMT reductions without causing pandemic-scale misery. CARB wants to [double local transit capacity](#) by 2030, but transit use has fallen [by 32 percent since 2005 and accounted for just 2.2 percent](#) of all commuting trips by 2019, despite billions of dollars of bus and rail spending. Low-income riders have increasingly shunned transit [in favor of driving](#). Transit [ridership dropped by another 50 percent](#) post-pandemic, prompting [a \\$5.1 billion state bailout](#), as transit operators vowed to find [“a new business model.”](#)

Pushing residents into higher-density walkable locations, CARB’s long-sought land-use goal, also failed to cut VMT despite years of state [“sustainable-community” planning](#) and programs. Most of California, beyond a handful of the most expensive urban areas, lacks sufficient [“key destination accessibility”](#) for residents to avoid driving. The state’s construction of even more high-density housing in existing low-VMT locations has already contributed to its highest-in-the-nation [rental costs](#), and building more such housing will needlessly degrade the state’s few walkable communities, unless jobs and business follow new residents. Most employment growth took place outside of [dense urban areas](#) before the pandemic, and that trend intensified post-pandemic. Meantime, California’s single-family-home construction, the type of housing people [overwhelmingly prefer, has dropped by a third since 2005](#). California has by far the largest number of unaffordable housing markets [in the country](#).

CARB proposes [“reimagin\[ing\]” roadways to support “people over cars.”](#) This means reducing existing road and freeway capacity that residents have already paid for by [eliminating lanes or reserving them for](#) bikes, scooters, or buses, [converting freeways](#) into high-priced toll roads, and raising parking costs. State planners [eventually want to track and tax every mile that each state resident drives](#).

These schemes are proving wildly unpopular. [Culver City suspended](#) high-profile bike- and bus-lane projects after public backlash. San Diego officials [overwhelmingly voted to eliminate a VMT tax](#) from its regional transportation plans.

The potentially astronomical cost of triggering the dramatic VMT cuts that CARB envisions is becoming clear as new projects grapple with California’s VMT-mitigation laws. Southern California transportation agencies, for example, plan to spend [\\$413 million](#) on 16 miles of new toll roads to reduce chronic delays along portions of Interstate 5. State-approved models, however, project that even this minute addition to the thousands of miles of existing freeways will “induce” over 100 million additional VMT per year. To offset those projected increases, the agencies would allocate yet another [\\$442 million for new transit, bus passes, housing densification, and bike lanes](#), amounting to \$20 per vehicle-mile reduced.

[Current population estimates](#) and [CARB projections](#) indicate that to meet the new targets, annual state VMT must fall by about 85 billion in 2030, and by close to 100 billion in 2045. At a rate of \$20 per vehicle-mile reduced, these efforts would cost state residents \$1.6 trillion over the next six years, and nearly \$2 trillion by 2045.

And these sobering estimates may be optimistic. By 2030, for instance, nearly 20 million Californians, or about 3 million people per year, would need to reduce VMT by 50 percent, to

4,280 miles per year, a four-pandemic-sized cutback, to cut total state VMT by 25 percent. Inducing anything like this scale of change in six years will require inconceivable amounts of new housing and “key destination.” Doing so will also require lawmakers to impose punitive mileage taxes to reduce otherwise-unavoidable driving, along with major new aid programs to compensate for the disproportionate road-tax burdens on the state’s millions of car-dependent citizens.

While state officials have not yet endorsed CARB’s plan, another option for VMT hawks may be to encourage more people to leave California. Unlike [the European Union](#), CARB [counts only emissions caused by human activity within the state borders](#). [Since 2020, California’s population has fallen by over 500,000](#), which, in CARB’s accounting, reduced in-state VMT 4.5 billion miles per year. The state can hit its total VMT reductions without further inconveniencing its remaining residents just by persuading another 9.4 million people to move by 2030, and 11 million by 2045.

CARB’s anti-driving aspirations directly clash with the duties of state highway transportation officials charged with maintaining safe and efficient highways. A bike advocate at the state highway department [recently filed](#) a whistleblower complaint, alleging that she was demoted for objecting to highway safety and carpool lanes. A coalition of 60 Green groups followed quickly with a [letter](#) criticizing Governor Newsom for allowing these types of highway safety and carpool projects to proceed.

Climate risks, of course, are related to global emissions, not state-by-state figures. It’s comical to think that moving VMT from one place to another lowers these risks. But California already refuses to account for the emissions associated with [the vast amount](#) of new electrical-generation equipment, vehicles and appliances, batteries, crude oil, and natural gas that its climate plans contemplate. [As thousands of businesses leave the state](#), CARB also doesn’t count emissions related to the goods and services residents increasingly import from higher-emission producers. It would be similarly absurd for the state to claim a victory against automobiles if it cuts VMT by losing population.

CARB has never explained exactly how much future climate harm Californians will avoid by unilaterally pursuing such a draconian climate policy. State residents deserve an answer before they are forced to endure such unprecedented VMT reductions—a policy never specifically considered, let alone approved, by popular or legislative vote.

Jennifer Hernandez is a senior fellow at the Breakthrough Institute. This article first appeared in the City Journal October 23, 2023

PREMODERN DIVERSITY VS. CIVILIZATIONAL UNITY OLD IMMIGRATION ONCE ENRICHED AMERICA, BUT OUR NEW VERSION IS DESTROYING IT BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

Few Romans in the late decades of their 5th-century AD empire celebrated their newfound “diversity” of marauding Goths, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Huns, and Vandals.

These tribes en masse had crossed the unsecured Rhine and Danube borders to harvest Roman bounty without a care about what had created it.



Their agendas were focused on destroying the civilization they overran rather than peacefully integrating into and perpetuating the Empire.

Ironically, Rome's prior greatness had been due to the extension of citizenship to diverse people throughout Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

Millions had been assimilated, integrated, and intermarried and often superseded the original Italians of the early Roman Republic. Such fractious diversity had led to unity around the idea of Rome.

New citizens learned to enjoy the advantages of habeas corpus, sophisticated roads, aqueducts, and public architecture, and the security offered by the legions.

The unity of these diverse peoples fused into a single culture that empowered Rome. In contrast, the later disunity of hundreds of thousands of tribal people flooding into and dividing Rome doomed it.

To meet the challenge of a multiracial society, the only viable pathway to a stable civilization of racially and ethnically different people is a single, shared culture.

Some nations can find collective success as a single homogenous people like Japan or Switzerland.

Or equally, but with more difficulty, nations can prosper with heterodox peoples—but only if united by a single, inclusive culture as the American melting-pot once attested.

But a baleful third option—a multicultural society of diverse, unassimilated, and often rival tribes—historically is a prescription for collective suicide.

We are beginning to see just that in America, as it sheds the melting pot, and adopts the salad bowl of unassimilated and warring tribes.

The U.S. is now seeing a rise in violent racially and religiously motivated hate crimes.

The border is nonexistent.

Millions of unlawful immigrants mock their hosts by their brazen illegal entrance.



They will receive little civic education to become Americans. But they will learn that unassimilated tribalism wins them influence and advantages.

In contrast, America was once a rare historical example of a multiracial, but single-culture democracy that actually worked.

Multigenerational Americans were often energized by keeping up with new hard-working immigrants determined to have a shot at success in a free society long denied them at home.

Other large nations have tried such a democratic multiracial experiment—most notably Brazil and India. But both are still plagued by tribal feuding and serial violence.

What once worked for America, but now is forgotten were a few precepts essential for a multiracial constitutional state wedded to generous immigration.

One, America is enriched at its cultural periphery by the food, fashion, art, music, and literature of immigrants.

But it would be destroyed if such diversity extended to its core. No one wants Middle-East norms regarding gays or emancipated women.

No one prefers Mexican jurisprudence to our courts.

No one here wants the dictatorship of Venezuela or the totalitarianism of communist China.

Two, people vote with their feet to emigrate to America. They flee their native culture and government to enjoy their antitheses in America.

But remember—no sane immigrant would flee Mexico, Gaza, or Zimbabwe only to wish to implant in their new homes the very culture and norms that drove them out from their old.

If they did that to their new home, it would then become as unattractive to them as what they fled.

Three, tribalism wrecks nations.



Just compare what happened in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, or Iraq.

Anytime one ethnic, racial, or religious group refuses to surrender its prime identity in exchange for a shared sense of self, other tribes for their own survival will do the same.

All then rebrand their superficial appearance as essential not incidental to whom they are.

And like nuclear proliferation that sees other nations go nuclear once a neighboring power gains the bomb, so too the tribalism of one group inevitably leads only to more tribalism of others. The result is endless Hobbesian strife.

Four, immigration must be measured, so that newcomers can be manageably assimilated and integrated rather than left to form rival tribal cliques.

Five, it must be legal. Otherwise, the idea of citizenship is reduced to mere residency, while the legal applicant is rendered a fool for his adherence to the law.

Six, it must be meritocratic, so immigrants come with English and skills and do not burden their hosts.

And last, it must be diverse. Only that way, can all groups abroad have equal access to the American dream.

A diversity of immigrants also ensures that no one particular ethnic or political tribe seeks to use immigration to further divide the nation.

In sum, the old immigration once enriched America, but our new version is destroying

Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness and the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is an American military historian, columnist, a former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004. Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush. Hanson is also a farmer (growing raisin grapes on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author most recently of *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won*, *The Case for Trump* and the recently released *The Dying Citizen*.

‘ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO INDUSTRIALIZE THE COAST’: CALIFORNIA’S CENTRAL COAST RESIDENTS WORK TO STOP — OR AT LEAST SLOW DOWN — OFFSHORE WIND

BY JULIE CART



Massive ocean wind farms off Morro Bay and Santa Barbara County — which could transform these quiet coastal towns and affect marine life — face a turbulent path.

MORRO BAY — Joey Racano used to have a dining room table. Now the sunlit nook off the family kitchen more often than not serves as a conference room. The table is covered with maps, thick binders bulging with tech reports, towers of meeting minutes, abandoned coffee mugs — the accumulation of years of community vigilance.

On this day, his home is a lively place where a handful of locals are discussing one of California’s most complex and audacious initiatives — loading the Pacific Ocean with sprawling wind farms that float 20 miles from shore.

To some, it’s an exciting endeavor that will power [California’s carbon-free electricity grid](#) of the future. To others, including the people around the table, the construction of untried technology off the coast carries too many risks and unknowns.

“This is just another attempt to industrialize the coast,” said Rachel Wilson, who lives in Cayucos, a tiny, old-fashioned beach town, and regularly attends public meetings about the wind projects. “I can just see Port Hueneme with cranes and lights and a huge wharf in my charming little coastal community. No way.”

Last December, the federal government offered its [first-ever wind energy leases](#) off the California coast, concluding with five companies leasing deep ocean waters off the Central Coast and Humboldt/Del Norte counties. Included are 376 square miles that will hold three massive floating wind farms off Morro Bay, each with perhaps 50 or more turbines that will tower about 900 feet above the surface of the ocean. In addition, a developer has proposed a much smaller demonstration project of four turbines in state waters 2.8 miles off Santa Barbara County.

[Local officials in Humboldt](#) are hopeful that wind farms will boost their economy, although they are wary of the impacts and the accelerated pace. But the mood is different along the Central Coast: In Morro Bay and neighboring areas, some people are trying to stop the projects — or at least slow them down — until more can be understood about how the offshore wind industry might alter a place they cherish.

“I can just see Port Hueneme with cranes and lights and a huge wharf in my charming little coastal community. No way.”

RACHEL WILSON, CAYUCOS RESIDENT

The coastal economy here is largely dependent on lonely beaches and bluffs where vacationers flock to swim in quiet coves, look for migrating humpback whales and watch piles of corpulent elephant seals wrestle or snore. Main streets have remained as visitors remember them from their childhoods.

The region has a history of environmental awakening, and its residents have the energy to write letters, attend public meetings and challenge development they view as incompatible with the Central Coast vibe.

If the group of neighbors gathered around Racano's table in Los Osos is any indication, the area is not in a mood to embrace the change.

But ready or not, change is coming. From Monterey to Morro Bay and beyond, the Central Coast in the next decade will become a vital link in the state's shift to 100% carbon-free energy.

First of its kind, the floating wind technology carries a host of unknowns, including how the projects will affect marine life, especially whales. The projects off Morro Bay will bring with them onshore development, but exactly how it will all come together is still to be determined. Building and operating them and bringing the power to shore will require a new, expanded port somewhere along the coast, as well as offshore and onshore local substations and transmission lines.

The waters off the Central Coast are among the Pacific Ocean's most biologically rich and diverse, where warm water from the south collides with cooler water from the north, a mashup that biologists say creates one of the rarest and most distinct marine areas in the world.

Accessible from the teeming bustle of Southern California and the searing heat of the Central Valley, this quiet coast draws throngs of tourists year-round: San Luis Obispo County alone [hosted 7.5 million visitors](#) last year.

Residents say they won't abide drastic changes any more than they would accept altering their beloved Morro Rock, a volcanic plug more than 21 million years old that squats like a totem in the bay.

At the residents' meeting, ideas ping-pong around the table, voices rising and overlapping. How are boats going to move in and out of Morro Bay's harbor? What will happen to the biologically-valuable Estero Bay? What about whales, fish and birds? How might our hometowns be transformed?



Left: Los Osos resident Joey Racano leafs through reports at a meeting of neighbors concerned about offshore wind projects. Right: Community

members from the Morro Bay area meet to discuss what's next.
Photos by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

Citing the need for clean energy and the potential to create nearly 12,000 specialized construction jobs over five years, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors [voted in June to support offshore wind development off its coast](#). The board also called for state and federal funds to review the potential of building a clean-energy port in the county and study the wind farm's impacts on the region's valuable commercial fisheries.

The multinational energy company [Equinor](#), which holds one of the three wind leases off Morro Bay, says it wants to be "good partners" with residents and help foster an economic revival.

"When we come into a new location it's really important for us to come in and be respectful of the community where we will live and operate," said Molly Morris, Equinor's president of U.S. offshore wind operations. "It's important that we continue to hear from the people we potentially impact."

During Equinor's community meetings about its East Coast offshore wind projects, Morris said residents expressed the same concerns about viewsheds, property values and community disruption. "There's NIMBYism, there's a lot of 'I don't want to see this from my beach.' I totally understand that," she said.

California Energy Commission Chairman David Hochschild said many residents' fears do not align with the facts.

"There is not a single area on the coastline where offshore wind is going to be closer than 20 miles, in some cases 60 miles," he said, referring to the five leases in federal waters off Morro Bay and the Humboldt coast. "In terms of view impact, there will be lights at night but you won't see them. Many communities are excited about this. They see this as an opportunity."

But can large-scale renewable energy coexist with a lightly-developed coastline? At this point, less than a year since the lease sales were finalized, state and federal officials are in the uncomfortable position of telling the public that they simply don't know.

"There is not a single area on the coastline where offshore wind is going to be closer than 20 miles, in some cases 60 miles. In terms of view impact, there will be lights at night but you won't see them."

DAVID HOCHSCHILD, CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

All projects must first pass muster with California's array of regulators, who wield the sharpest of weapons — the state's environmental quality law.

“It’s not a secret — there are a unique set of regulations that have been important to California and will continue to be,” said Tyler Studds, CEO of Golden State Wind, which holds an 80,000-acre lease off the Central Coast. “We went into this with our eyes open, we were prepared for it.”

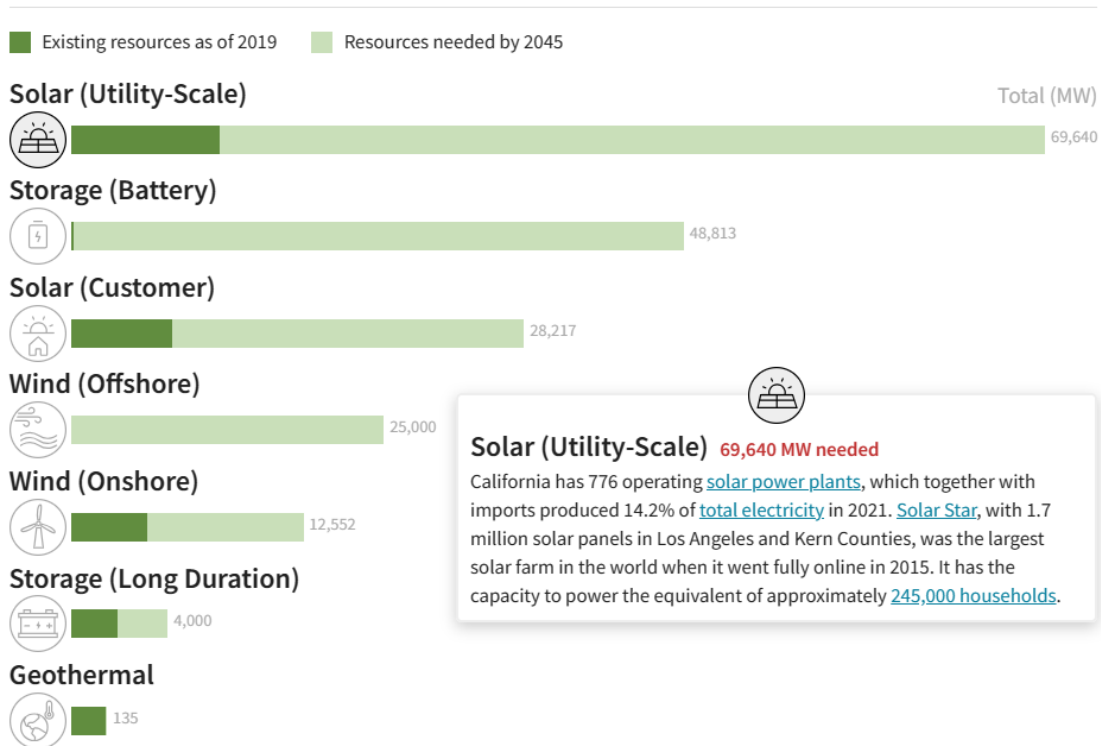
Many Morro Bay area residents have vague but firmly-held notions about the potential impacts, even though the spinning blades — as big as one-and-a-half football fields — will be too far offshore to be seen from anyone’s kitchen window.

They also fear the intrusion, a disturbance akin to living with a neighbor undergoing a long and loud renovation project.

California needs three times more power capacity to reach 100% clean energy by 2045

An initial analysis suggests the goal is technically feasible but only with a sustained high pace of construction: 6 GW annually for the next 25 years. Over the last decade, the state has built on average 1 GW of utility solar and 0.3 GW of wind per year.

👉 Click one of the resources below for more details.



Graphic: Erica Yee, CalMatters

According to the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, offshore wind turbines are expected to have a service life of about 20 years and the blades require repair every two to five years. The floating platforms, buffeted by wave action, will need to be shut down, disconnected and towed to shore every 10 years for extensive repairs.

The project work begins with up to five years of site surveys and planning, with boats ferrying workers and equipment out to sea for extensive studies of fish, birds and the geology of the sea floor. A conservative federal estimate of the number of survey boat round trips from Morro Bay, for example, is more than 450 over 873 days.

“This will create a drastic change to the community,” said Robert Sidenberg of Arroyo Grande, who said he is working with others on a ballot initiative in San Luis Obispo County to stop offshore wind. “I don’t trust anyone from Sacramento with what they are telling us, which is very little. People had this sprung on them. These wind farms are ridiculous, the whole thing is absurd.”



The Morro Bay Harbor, with Morro Rock in the background, is likely to get busier as wind projects ramp up. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

Conservation groups generally support offshore wind but voice concerns about the pace of development and the many unknowns.

“Offshore wind represents a massive industrialization of the ocean,” said Laura Walsh, California policy manager for Surfrider, an environmental group focused on protecting the sea and shore. “The speed at which this is going should perk our ears. We need to make sure we are doing this properly. We are doing all this for climate goals, but the ocean is the largest carbon sequesterer we have. When you industrialize it, you jeopardize its ecosystem. You don’t get it back.”

A decades-long history of environmental activism

Marc McGinnes was a young corporate lawyer in San Francisco in 1969 when his mentor, U.S. Rep. Pete McCloskey, called him with an urgent summons: Get down to Santa Barbara, there’s been a blowout at an offshore oil well.

Over a week and a half, more than 100,000 barrels of crude oil spewed from Platform A, 6 miles at sea, and coated the coastline — and uncounted numbers of shorebirds and marine life.

Communities along the coast exploded in anger at the desecration of their beaches. “People began to scream and yell, then they began to organize,” said McGinnes, 81. As McCloskey had predicted, the disaster launched the practice of environmental law, along with the [modern American environmental movement](#).

McGinnes said the region’s ardor for environmental issues, especially local ones, has never cooled. Residents attend meetings, write letters and, as they did more than 50 years ago, speak up.

The current complaint: [Floventis Energy Ltd.](#) has proposed building a 6-square-mile wind farm floating less than 3 miles off the coast of Lompoc and the Vandenberg Space Force Base in Santa Barbara County. The demonstration project, known as CADEMO, would be California’s only offshore wind lease in state waters and the smallest of all the proposed floating wind projects.

The state is still reviewing [the project’s lease application](#), which was submitted in 2019, but Floventis says the small-scale project with four turbines could be producing energy in four years, powering as many as 60,000 homes.

While the wind farms off Morro Bay and Humboldt won’t be visible from the coast, the turbines off Santa Barbara County are much closer to shore and may be visible from high points in coastal towns.

The details are not final, but subsea cables would transmit the electricity to an onshore point near a boat dock south of Point Arguello, and a new onshore substation would be built at Vandenberg, with 11 miles of new overhead power lines, according to the company’s application.

“It’s not a pristine wilderness. Of course we are taking heat, and some people criticize it, and some people think this is the best thing. Do we have all the answers? No.”

MIKAEL JAKOBSSON, FLOVENTIS ENERGY

Santa Barbara, with its rooftop solar and electric vehicles, has been fiercely debating offshore wind. McGuinness doesn’t see a contradiction with advocating to protect the environment and being skeptical about the impacts of a clean energy source.

“Our demand isn’t that you should pack up and go home,” he said. “Just explain it to us with sufficient clarity so we understand the project.”

Mikael Jakobsson, Floventis Energy’s director, has heard the concerns.

“Obviously it’s a very nice area, but it’s full of activity. It’s not a pristine wilderness. Of course we are taking heat, and some people criticize it, and some people think this is the best thing. Do we have all the answers? No, we do not have all the answers,” he said.

Jakobsson said he aims to use the project as a demonstration — it’s better to develop new floating technology on a smaller scale and learn from it before embarking on building large wind farms in deeper waters.

“We have never been in deeper water than 300 feet. That’s a fact,” he said. “Talk about deploying fixed cables and anchors in dark water — we have never done that before.” Ultimately, he said, the company’s biological data and some technical data will be made public so developers can learn from each other.

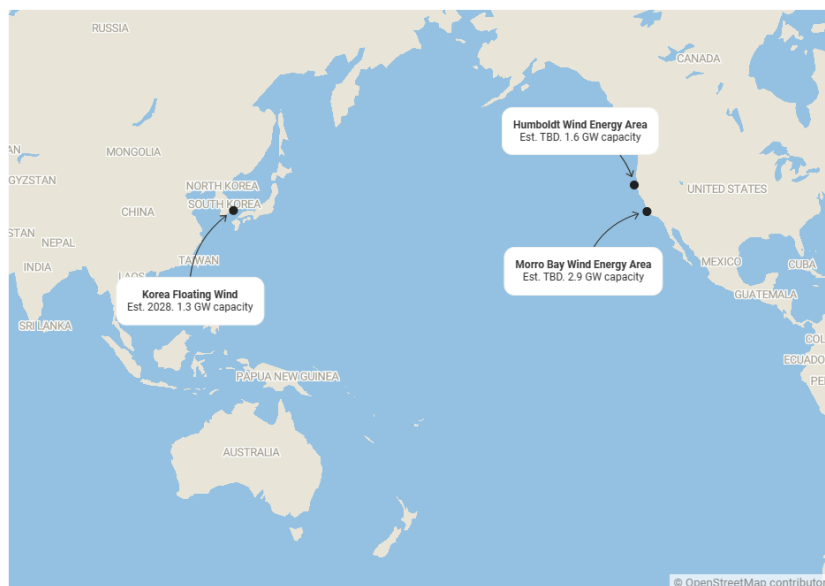
In part to minimize impacts on Santa Barbara County, the company says the giant platforms likely would be constructed at the Port of San Francisco, and then towed to the Port of Los Angeles, where the bulk of the work to assemble the turbines and staging of vessels and equipment would occur. Then they would be towed back to the waters off Vandenberg.

Jakobsson said critics should take the long view in the face of an urgent need to address climate change.

“If no one does anything, nothing will happen,” he said. “The house is on fire and you are discussing where we should hang the fire extinguisher.” Marine impacts are likely, but to what extent.

Floating Offshore Wind Farms: Planned and Completed

Large offshore wind farms with floating platforms are a fairly recent innovation. Only four are now operating worldwide, with many more in the works, including projects in two large areas off the coast of California that hold five leases.



Created with [Datawrapper](#)

The ocean off California has the nation’s most desirable wind resource. But because the strongest winds occur far off the coast in deep waters, it is not practical to install traditional platforms that sit on the ocean floor. What’s envisioned instead are wind turbines that float on the surface, tethered to one another and the seabed. It will be the first time in the world that floating wind farms are placed at this depth and distance from shore.

As expected with novel technology deployed in a new environment, it’s almost impossible to say with certainty what the ecological impacts will be. Even the companies building the wind farms are not completely certain about the technology they will deploy.

“Although we can draw on data and information from other parts of the world and from similar industries in California, realistically, we will not be able to know the full scope and scale of impacts from offshore wind to California’s marine resources until projects are in the water and we are able to monitor and measure the resulting effects,” the staff of the California Coastal Commission wrote in a [2022 report](#).

Benjamin Ruttenberg, director of [Cal Poly San Luis Obispo’s Center for Coastal Marine Sciences](#), studies human impacts on the ocean and how to manage them. He said he would like to see more information about how ocean creatures may interact with the new floating structures.

“Some critters and some organisms are going to be impacted. There’s no question about that,” Ruttenberg said. “But the bigger question is, is that impact going to be the same as climate is having on the ocean?”



Sea lions rest on a buoy in Morro Bay. They are the largest marine mammals that live year-round in the bay, where they feed primarily on squid, fish and octopus. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

The Coastal Commission staff noted that migratory birds and sea mammals will have to navigate through unfamiliar infrastructure above the waves and under the sea.

“Each offshore wind development project incrementally increases the risk of bird strikes, vessel strikes and entanglement, and increases the impacts of displacement. Whales and seabirds are of particular concern for these types of impacts,” [the report](#) found.

There are strategies to reduce the peril for seabirds, for example. Early results from an ongoing project at the [Schatz Energy Research Center](#) at Cal Poly Humboldt suggest design changes that lessen birds’ attraction to the platforms, such as fewer nighttime lights and reduced areas for perching.

"We will not be able to know the full scope and scale of impacts from offshore wind to California’s marine resources until projects are in the water."

2022 CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION REPORT

Many of the impacts are likely to occur during construction, a busy time when the massive platforms are towed into position, tethered by piles or anchors driven into the sea floor, with cables running to shore and between platforms, and ships hauling materials and workers.

Marine mammals could get caught up in an array of crisscrossing cables, or trapped in marine debris.

Whales are vulnerable, scientists say, both because of where and how they feed but also how they navigate. Baleen whales like humpbacks move along the seafloor, mouths open and vacuuming krill as they go. Construction noise, boat traffic and an electromagnetic field produced by wind farms’ cables could discombobulate them.

Along the East Coast, an unusual number of humpbacks have been stranded on beaches in the vicinity of offshore wind operations in recent years. But state and federal authorities say there is no evidence that the projects played any role in the deaths of more than 200 whales. The "[unusual mortality event](#)" began in 2016, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which blamed ship strikes or entanglement for the deaths.

“Some critters and some organisms are going to be impacted. There’s no question about that. But the bigger question is, is that impact going to be the same as climate is having on the ocean?”

BENJAMIN RUTTENBERG, CAL POLY SAN LUIS OBISPO’S CENTER FOR COASTAL MARINE SCIENCES

Of the two federal wind lease areas off California, Morro Bay has the highest whale density. Coastal Commission Executive Director Kate Huckelbridge said California will require continuous monitoring for any effects on marine mammals.

“We can understand how one whale will interact with one cable but that doesn't mean we understand how a population of whales will interact with a project,” she said. “We are pushing to understand the larger scale.”

Powerful ocean winds create an aquatic updraft — known as upwelling — that drags nutrients from the deep sea up where fish, turtles and other creatures gorge on them. The wind turbines could decrease upwelling by as much as 10%, [researchers say](#), reducing the food supply in the area.



Sea otters, which are protected as a threatened species, feed on crabs, clams and urchins in Morro Bay. Marine biologists say offshore wind projects are likely to affect marine life, but they do not know to what extent. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

Climate change is rapidly altering the world's oceans, making the siting of renewable energy projects in fragile seascapes a complicated and double-edged proposition for some researchers.

Eleanore Humphries, senior manager of federal ocean policy at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, said the institution supports environmentally-responsible renewable energy projects and the need for scientific review.

“It's a world-class ecosystem,” she said. “It's important to acknowledge the need to get crucial baseline monitoring on the water now so that three years from now we've got something to evaluate against.”

Conflicted stances by federal agencies

The Department of Defense has long been concerned about development off California's coast, saying commercial activities could impinge on military training and air defense radar systems. In particular, the Navy deemed offshore wind development incompatible with its mission across [wide swaths of the ocean](#) off California.

“As offshore wind develops, so does the possibility that some turbines would be located within the line of site of coastal radar systems. If not mitigated, such wind development could cause clutter and interference for radar systems involved in air traffic control, weather forecasting, homeland security, and national defense missions,” the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) says on its website.

But recently, the military did an about-face. The Defense Department [signed an agreement](#) in August that established ground rules for the state wind project off Vandenberg. Military representatives in California and Washington, D.C. did not respond to questions from CalMatters.



The smaller wind project in state waters will be less than three miles off Vandenberg Space Force Base. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which operates the national marine sanctuary system, also has made an accommodation for wind development.

In 2015 the Northern Chumash nominated about 7,600 square miles from Cambria to Point Conception to become the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. NOAA began the official process in 2021 to declare it a sanctuary.

The designation would protect a unique part of the Pacific that is home to tidepools, kelp forests, whales, seals, sea otters and other marine life — known as the “Serengeti of the Sea.”

Although [activities such as fishing are not banned](#) in national marine sanctuaries, they often are restricted or require federal permits.

But during the time when the federal agency was considering the Chumash’s application, federal and state officials began leasing wind projects in that same area. This created a conflict, since energy development generally is restricted in national marine protected zones, so the [wind industry](#) and the federal [Bureau of Ocean Energy Management](#) sent letters to NOAA advocating for boundary adjustments.

In September, in a controversial move, NOAA redrew the original sanctuary map in a new [draft management plan](#), removing nearly 2,000 square miles from the northern end, from Cambria to Morro Bay. That cut out the federal wind lease area, where the projects' undersea cables would have been problematic in a sanctuary.

“We need to have conservation and renewables together, they have to work together. But not there. It’s a horrible idea.”

VIOLET SAGE WALKER, CHUMASH TRIBAL COUNCIL

However, the smaller proposed state wind project off Vandenberg remains within the sanctuary boundaries. Because that application is still being processed by the state, NOAA considers it “speculative,” said Paul E. Michel, the agency’s regional policy coordinator. If the wind farm is approved, permits will likely be required.

In an interview with CalMatters before the draft plan was released, Bill Douros, NOAA’s regional director of sanctuaries for the West Coast region, called the sanctuary area an environmental treasure. But he said offshore wind wouldn’t necessarily threaten it.

“How do we find a pathway that will create opportunities where both interests will be met without either one debilitating the other? I’m not sure four wind turbines offshore would unravel all of the protections,” he said.

NOAA's new plan added some waters to the sanctuary’s southern boundary, stretching to the Gaviota coast. But experts say removing the northern section is troubling because the sanctuary would lose its connectivity to national sanctuaries to the north in Monterey Bay, and to the south, the Channel Islands.

The Northern Chumash, who have [resided on the Central Coast](#) for 20,000 years, oppose the boundary changes. They support offshore wind, but are adamant that the siting of the state project tramples on their cultural heritage.

“We have worked so long to get this right, we won’t compromise Morro Bay to get it out of the sanctuary,” said Tribal Council Chair Violet Sage Walker. “We need to have conservation and renewables together, they have to work together. But not there. It’s a horrible idea.”

Walker said Floentis has been insensitive to the tribe’s cultural objections. “If we have to occupy the land again to protect that guy from destroying our stuff, we will,” she said.

Not all Native Americans in the region see it the same way. The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians on Friday announced an agreement with Floentis: The tribe will support the project operating within the sanctuary while the company will fund workforce training and other programs, said tribal attorney Sam Cohen.

The federal agency is [accepting public comments](#) on its sanctuary plan until Oct. 25, with a designation expected sometime next year.

Data gaps and scarce information

International companies come to Elizabeth Diller when they need a jungle guide to lead them through the tangle of federal and state environmental permitting of large projects.

Diller, the offshore wind director at the international consulting firm ICF, said wind developers — many accustomed to European regulations or state rules on the Atlantic Seaboard — are in for a shock when they encounter the density of California’s environmental oversight.

“It does add a layer of complexity,” Diller said. “If you work on the East Coast you deal with federal agencies and state agencies, but not with the rigor as in California.”

More than a dozen federal and state agencies have a role in assessing the projects, which also will require a massive infusion of private and public funds. Each of the five wind farms off California’s coast could cost \$5 billion to develop, construct and assemble.

“It’s a new industry in California and a new technology on this scale and in an environment that has never seen this infrastructure,” Diller said. “The agencies don’t know a lot about offshore wind, they don’t know a lot about the technology and they have never regulated or permitted any of it. It’s going to be a big challenge to get these projects off the ground.”

From proposal to providing power in four steps

The Federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management oversees wind energy leases in deep ocean waters. These four steps include only the ones that this federal energy agency must take. But other state and federal agencies must review and sign off on the projects before they can be built and start producing power.



Planning and analysis

~2 years

- Intergovernmental task force
- Request for information or call for information and nominations
- Area identification
- Environmental reviews



Leasing

~1-2 years

- Publish leasing notices
- Conduct auction or negotiate lease terms
- Issue lease(s)



Site assessment

Up to 5 years

- Site characterization
- Site assessment plan



Construction and operation

~2 years

- Construction and operations plan
- Facility design report and fabrication and installation report
- Decommissioning plan
- Environmental and technical reviews

Source: BOEM's Regulatory Framework and Guidelines



Saying she can't endorse projects that her community has heard so much about but understands so little, San Luis Obispo County Supervisor Debbie Arnold abstained from the board's 4-0 vote last summer supporting offshore wind development.

She said she is open-minded about wind energy but she attended a congressional hearing and didn't like the way officials spoke about the region. "They were talking to us like we were just some little spot, like local citizens don't matter," Arnold said.

"I get the feeling like there are some policy makers who are jumping the gun, who are pushing this. If you ask people, for the most part they live in this county to not live in a big area of industrialization. Most people have a fondness for just the way it is."

State Sen. John Laird, a strong supporter of offshore wind, participated in a town hall meeting in Morro Bay, with the intent of discussing the offshore wind projects.

“People had big apprehensions and there was limited knowledge,” the Santa Cruz Democrat said. “The one time everyone applauded was when I said that it will be subject to environmental review and we will work to mitigate every impact.

“People have tremendous concerns and there hasn’t been enough work done to at least give a context for what little information there is on these projects.”



Linda Krop, an attorney with the Environmental Defense Center, said there hasn’t been sufficient environmental and scientific review of the wind projects. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

Linda Krop, chief counsel of the Santa Barbara-based Environmental Defense Center, said the accelerated pace of the projects makes them vulnerable to legal challenges in the future. It was a mistake, she said, that federal officials hadn’t conducted an environmental analysis of the entire Central Coast lease area, “from the air to the water column to the sea floor” before the leases occurred.

The normal environmental review process will be streamlined and truncated, she said, at the behest of state and federal officials, which she said is “opening the door for challenges.”

[Jenn Eckerle](#), California's deputy secretary for oceans and coastal policy, said there is another way of looking at the harvesting of wind: The projects are focusing a lens on an understudied part of the planet.

“We are going to address data and research gaps, and the leasees will support funding for that,” she said. “If nothing else, the first wave of projects will create a repository of information about what goes on in the deep ocean. Information is power.”

Julie Cart joined CalMatters as a projects and environment reporter in 2016 after a long career at the Los Angeles Times, where she held many positions: sportswriter, national correspondent and environment reporter. In 2009 she and colleague Bettina Boxall won the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting for their series on wildfires in the West. This article first appeared in the Cal Matters of October 12, 2023.



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