



**Monthly Drought Update**  
**August 16, 2016**  
**San Luis Obispo County**

Note: Information provided in this update varies by date.

**CURRENT CONDITIONS**

**U.S. Drought Monitor Status:**

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor report released August 4, 2016, indicates the majority of San Luis Obispo County remains at the **D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating**. Approximately 59% of the state remains at a level D2 – Severe Drought or worse with 21% of the state in a D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating.

**San Luis Obispo County Precipitation Totals (in inches):**

Sub-Region	Area / Rain Station	Average Annual Rainfall	2015-16 Water Year Total Rainfall	2016-17 Water Year (July 2016-June 2017)	
				Cumulative Total	% of Total Average
North Coast	Cambria (ALERT #717)	22.0	17.1 (78%)	0	0%
	Whale Rock Reservoir (County Site #166.1)	16.0	14.2 (89%)	0	0%
Inland	Paso Robles (County Site #10.0)	14.1	13.3 (94%)	0	0%
	NE Atascadero (ALERT #711)	17.0	11.3 (66%)	0	0%
	Atascadero MWC (County Site #34.0)	17.5	15.5 (88%)	0	0%
	Santa Margarita (ALERT #723)	24.0	16.6 (69%)	0	0%
	Salinas Dam (County Site #94)	20.9	17.3 (83%)	0	0%
South Coast	SLO Reservoir (ALERT #749)	24.0	19.0 (79%)	0	0%
	Lopez Dam (ALERT #737)	21.0	18.0 (86%)	0	0%
	Nipomo South (ALERT #730)	16.0	9.6 (60%)	0	0%
	Nipomo East (ALERT #728)	18.0	12.3 (68%)	0	0%

Note: This table contains provisional data from automated gauges and has not been verified. All units reported in inches. Report generated at 11:00am on 8/01/2016.

**Reservoir Levels (% of capacity):**

Reservoir	% of Capacity	Current Acre Feet Storage
Nacimiento	29%	111,035
Whale Rock	34%	13,278
Lopez	26%	13,054
Salinas	11%	2,612

Source: [www.slocountywater.org](http://www.slocountywater.org) County of San Luis Obispo

## NEAR-TERM OUTLOOK

The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook, valid for July 21 – October 31, shows most of the Central Coast still in exceptional drought, which is likely to persist. From mid-June through mid-July 2016, most changes in drought conditions have been for the worse. Seasonably dry weather should keep drought conditions intact across the California.

## STATE WATER

**Status:** On December 1, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced the initial 2016 State Water Project (SWP) allocation at 10% and indicated that the actual allocation could rise or fall depending on the amount of rain and snow California receives this winter; this allocation has been increased to 60% per the April 21, 2016 Notice to State Water Project Contractors. As of July 31, 2016, San Luis Reservoir was at 10% capacity and 20% of average.

## VULNERABLE WATER SYSTEMS

### County Service Areas (CSA's)

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#### Santa Margarita (CSA 23)

- Drought response level at ALERT status.
- Primary pumping is from shallow well No. 4; water is also being pumped from deep well No. 3 to reduce needs from well No. 4.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted on August 12, 2014 limiting outdoor watering to two days a week. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.
- The intertie with Atascadero Mutual Water Company (AMWC) is complete and ready for operation.

#### Shandon (CSA 16)

- Two wells currently provide all water to the Shandon community and continued to be monitored.
- Connection to the State Water Project construction is scheduled for completion in August 2016; State Water is anticipated to be delivered to Shandon in August.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted on August 12, 2014 limiting outdoor watering to two days a week. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

#### Cayucos (CSA 10A)

- Supply is available from Whale Rock and one on-site well. Staff has given a presentation to the Advisory Committee and business groups regarding conserving this supply.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted on August 12, 2014 limiting outdoor watering to two days a week. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

#### Avila Valley (CSA 12)

- Adequate supply is available from Lopez and State water for this year.
- The Low Reservoir Response Plan for Zone 3 (the Lopez system) is in effect; municipal deliveries have been cut 10%, however, CSA12 continues to use less than its full allocation and "bank" water for subsequent years.
- Evaluation of emergency drought mitigation options for all of Zone 3 (including CSA12) is underway.

#### **Chorro Valley Institutions (CMC, Animal Services, Sheriff, County Operations, Camp San Luis, Cuesta College, County Office of Education)**

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- 2016 State water deliveries are at 60% and all sub-contractor's needs are being met.
- The existing distribution system is being evaluated to assure water losses are minimized.
- CMC has completed their water treatment plant upgrade project.
- Discussions with City of San Luis Obispo to exchange Nacimiento for Whale Rock are being initiated if State Water is insufficient in 2018.

## **San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Systems**

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### **Zone 3 – Lopez Water Project (CSA12, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Oceano)**

- The Low Reservoir Response Plan for Zone 3 is in effect; agencies were provided their 3 year water supply per the Governor's May 19, 2016 drought executive order; municipal deliveries have been reduced.
- Downstream environmental and agricultural releases have been cut 9.5%.
- District staff in conjunction with the Zone 3 Technical Advisory Committee is evaluating options to increase District State Water deliveries to preserve Lopez Reservoir's water levels.

### **Salinas Water Project – Salinas Reservoir (Santa Margarita Lake)**

- The reservoir is at 11% capacity; City of San Luis Obispo is reliant on the Nacimiento and Whale Rock Reservoirs.

### **Nacimiento Water Project**

- The Project is operating at full annual allocation levels.
- The District Board of Supervisors approved distribution of all the NWP reserve water to the 5 original participants and 2 additional participants on April 19, 2016. Development of procedures to market surplus water to buyers is underway.

## **Non-County Operated**

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### **Cambria Community Services District**

- Emergency San Simeon Creek Brackish Water Supply Project went online on January 20, 2015. The district is now seeking a permit to operate it permanently.

### **San Simeon Community Services District**

- The CSD has a new well head salinity project to increase supplies in the current prop 84 grant round. DWR released draft funding recommendations and the San Luis Obispo IRWM region is recommended for 75% of grant request.

### **Heritage Ranch Community Services District**

- The Nacimiento River is the only available water source for the community of Heritage Ranch. An emergency inter-tie, funded with emergency grant funds, from the Nacimiento line is complete. Construction of the emergency inter-tie pipeline from Heritage Ranch is complete

### **Rural Paso Robles residents**

- Continuing to identify water-trucking options and examine outreach efforts. See County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation Website for drought relief update information.

## **IMPACTS**

### **Agricultural Impacts:**

Conditions within the agriculture industry reflect the continuing drought. High salinity levels accumulating in the soil caused by lack of leaching rains or flushing from irrigation continue to challenge growers. The resulting crop damage and reduced yields is especially serious for salt sensitive berry plants. Vegetable growers have reported more acreage has been left unplanted due to lack of irrigation water.

### Update on Producer Assistance Programs- USDA Farm Service Agency

#### *2017 NAP (Non-Insured Assistance Program):*

- New crop window planting periods for all San Luis Obispo County vegetables are now available for 2017. The crop planting periods are as follows:
  - PP01 September 1-February 28
  - PP02 March 1-August 31
- "Buy Up Insurance" is available on all crops including multiple plantings.
- 2017 NAP Application Deadlines:
  - 9/1/2016 Annual row crops (all crops with Multiple Planting periods)
  - 9/1/2016 All crops IU of GR,GZ,FG or SD
  - 10/1/2016 Fall planted strawberries , perennial tree Crops
- Coverage begins the later of: 30 calendar days after the date CCC-471 is filed, or the date the crop is planted, not to exceed the final planting date.

*2016 Livestock Forage Losses:*

- Producers in San Luis Obispo County are eligible to apply for 2016 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on non-irrigated native pasture.
- LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land. Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2017 for 2016 losses.
- Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

For information about the assistance programs, contact the USDA Farm Service Agency:

Templeton: (805) 434-0398 Ext 2.

Santa Maria: (805) 928-9269

**Fire Danger:**

Fire Danger

Since the beginning of the year, firefighters from CAL FIRE and the U.S. Forest Service have responded to over 3,451 wildfires across the state, burning 123,100 acres. The drought across the state is about to enter its 5th year and the effect on vegetation has been severe. The past winter did result in a few heavy rains and the grass crop is heavier in many areas compared to the last 3 years. Therefore, there is an increase in fine fuel loading this year and once these grasses cure, any new start could rapidly transition into the heavier dead fuels. In 2016, abundant grass and accumulated persistent dead brush will be the primary fuels that could contribute to larger, more frequent fires compared to the previous 3 years. Above normal large fire potential is expected from August through October 2016.

Equipment/Staffing

Locally, CAL FIRE is currently at transition staffing levels with 10 wildland engines, 3 dozers, 5 hand crews at Cuesta Conservation Camp, 5 hand crews at Ventura Conservation Camp, and 2 CCC crews at Camarillo Center. Paso Robles Air Attack Base is staffed with 2 air tactical aircraft and 2 air tankers. Defensible Space Inspectors (DSI) have conducted 2,978 inspections to date.

Live Fuel Moisture (LFM)

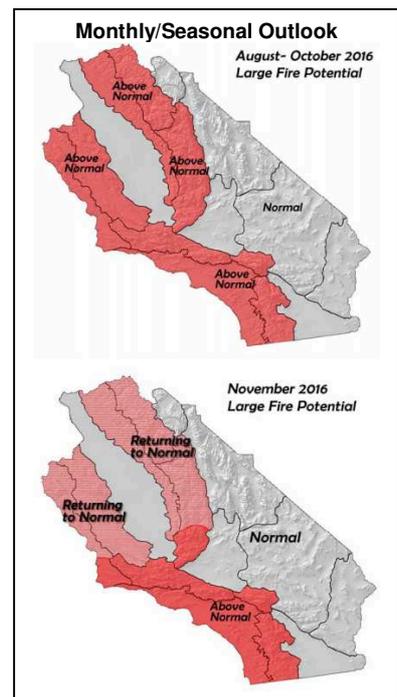
*(LFM is the moisture content of live vegetation expressed as a percentage of the oven-dry weight.)*

LFM values in the county peaked in March and continue the normal seasonal decline with many values already under historical averages but still above the critical level of 60. Due to the precipitation received thus far and mostly warm sunny weather, there is an abundant grass crop in most areas. Extended dry periods and warm windy weather will cause this grass to fully desiccate which will continue to promote rapidly spreading grass fires. With current conditions, in the absence of significant rain, we expect to see a continued increase in vegetation fires, particularly roadside ignitions. This abundant grass crop will provide the fuel bed for more frequent and faster spreading fires than in the previous 3 years.

Dead Fuel Moisture

*(The moisture content of dead organic fuels is another important component of the relative fire danger. As with LFM above, dead fuel moisture levels are a good indicator of how likely fuels are to ignite and how intensely they will burn. 100-hr fuel refers to vegetation between 1 and 3 inches in diameter and 1000-hr fuel is 3-6 inches. When the fuel moisture content is low, fires start easily and will spread rapidly.)*

Many fuel beds in the county, particularly coastal sage scrub, have seen a dramatic increase in the percentage of dead fuel as a result of the prolonged drought. In many areas, the volume of dead vegetation exceeds the volume of live vegetation. The current values are below historical averages and indicate a steady decline since the last rain due to the extended dry weather since March. More frequent and faster spreading grass fires are likely in 2016. Compared to 2015, the higher LFM value in brush



species is less of a mitigating factor for brush fires due to the extremely high percentage of dead brush fuels present throughout most fuel beds as a result of the multi-year drought. In 2016, abundant grass and accumulated persistent dead brush will be the primary fuels that could contribute to larger, more frequent fires compared to the previous 3 years.

#### Temperatures/Relative Humidity (RH)

*(When combined with other factors influencing the fire environment such as wind, steep topography, and low fuel moisture levels, hot temperatures and low RH can significantly increase the fire danger by increasing fire initiation, spread rates, burning intensity, and difficulty of control.)*

The weather trend seems to be warm, dry, and windy which favors an early start to an active fire season.

#### Energy Release Component (ERC)

*(ERC is an index related to how hot a fire could burn. It is directly related to the 24-hour, potential worst case, total available energy (BTUs) at the head of a fire. The ERC can serve as a good characterization of fire season as it tracks seasonal fire danger trends well. ERC has low variability, and is the best fire danger component for indicating the effects of intermediate to long-term drying on fire behavior.)*

Warm, dry, windy weather has resulted in ERC values that are above average, and rapidly increasing.

#### Forest and Range Impacts

Widespread tree mortality is plainly evident throughout the county. All tree species have been adversely affected by the drought. Thousands of coast live oaks of all sizes in all areas and at all elevations have died. The eucalyptus stands on the Nipomo mesa are showing a sharp increase in the number of dead trees and also in the number of live trees with dead crowns which substantially increases the amount of dead fuel loading available for fire.

The area most severely impacted is the Cambria Monterey Pine Forest (CMPF). Already one of the most endangered native forests in the world, the CMPF has been further devastated by the drought. The poor condition of the CMPF resulting from the decades-long problems of senescence, over-crowding, fire exclusion, development, pitch canker, bark beetles, and many other fungal and parasitic pathogens has been severely amplified by the drought. These cumulative impacts have created the current situation where approximately 40-50% of the overstory trees are dead or dying. In certain areas, mortality exceeds 90%. In addition to the major impacts to forest health, the resulting fire hazard has increased to the point where catastrophic stand-replacing fire is very likely. Hundreds of large dead hazard trees are poised to fall on homes, vehicles, and vital infrastructure.

CAL FIRE created a web-based map viewer to allow Californians to participate in understanding and identifying the areas most impacted with tree mortality as a threat to life and property. The viewer can be accessed at the following link: <http://frap.fire.ca.gov/projects/DroughtViewer>.

#### Emergency Permits

The County is continuing to work to provide relief from hazard tree permitting requirements in Cambria to facilitate tree removal on the high number of affected parcels. The County Planning and Building Department approved an emergency hazard tree removal permit allowing Cambria residents to remove dead hazardous trees with a no-cost permit.

#### Forest Assessments

Forest assessments under the direction of Cal Poly forestry faculty have been initiated to quantify the extent of this issue and the results will be made known as soon as they become available. This research work will continue and will provide the foundation for all the work that will occur under the grants described above.

#### **Economic:**

In an effort to coordinate local and state response to drought impacts the following surveys are being utilized by the County:

#### Drought Business Impact Survey

The Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) and the Employment Development Department (EDD) developed a streamlined survey to report drought-related job impacts. Collecting "real-time"

drought-related information is essential for the LWDA and the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force to identify the drought's impact on California's industries, employers, and workers. The survey, which collects information on drought impacts for employers allows the affected employer to report directly to the State, thereby, providing a level of confidentiality that business and industry need. A link to the new survey is available on the San Luis Obispo Workforce Development Board's website: [www.SLOworkforce.com](http://www.SLOworkforce.com).

#### Domestic Water Issues-Intake Form

The Governor's Drought Task Force created an online intake form for local, state, or tribal and federal agencies to document domestic water issues. The information is intended to inform and coordinate state response and mitigate drought impacts. Both agencies and individuals can complete the reporting form. Individuals with domestic water issues are encouraged to contact County Environmental Health at (805) 781-5544 or visit the state online reporting website at <https://mydrywatersupply.water.ca.gov/report/>.

### **STATE & FEDERAL KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH**

#### **DWR Releases CASGEM Status Report Showing Improvements in Groundwater Monitoring Efforts:**

On July 13, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released a new status report for the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) program for calendar years 2012-2015. The report shows improvements in statewide groundwater monitoring efforts including increased program participation and available data.

CASGEM data is used to determine groundwater level and storage trends, the effectiveness of groundwater management measures, the impact of the ongoing drought, and to implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014. For more information, visit DWR's [CASGEM Program](#) webpage.

### **COUNTY DROUGHT TASK FORCE KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH**

#### **County Office of Emergency Services:**

San Luis Obispo County OES continues to coordinate with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to provide updates on the drought situation, respond to specific information requests to Cal OES, and coordinate local emergency needs. County OES continues to participate in the statewide drought conference calls hosted by Cal OES.

#### **Emergency Actions:**

No new emergency actions have been taken specific to the drought in this reporting period.

#### **County Facilities Usage & Conservation Actions:**

The county has taken the following actions:

- Water Conservation: Water usage status updates for the users in the Utility Manager system and the County Operations Center show a 44% reduction countywide in water usage in April 2016 from April 2013.
- Fixture Replacement and Leak Repair: Staff continues to identify and repair leaks to minimize water loss.
- County Airport: As previously reported, County Airport fire hydrants must be flushed periodically to maintain safe water for drinking due to chlorine levels. The Airport is making the water from hydrant flushing available for agricultural operations, construction, or other purposes. Please contact the Airport at (805) 781-5205 if interested in using this free water.

#### **Drought Contingency Planning:**

The Public Health Department, the Public Works Department, and CAL FIRE/County Fire continue to develop plans to ensure there is adequate supply of water for firefighting and domestic water use in the event that a community does not have enough water.

## Attachment 1

### Water Purveyors GIS

Water purveyors GIS data contains the new vulnerability level field that was determined after assessing the results of a one-time voluntary 2014 survey questionnaire that was sent to both large and small water purveyors. The mapping of this data has been categorized by the assessed vulnerability levels which are Watch (green), Vulnerable (orange), Critical (red) and Pending Survey Results (blue) and is available for CalFire in a web map viewer. The link is on the home page under the County Drought Task Force heading of the SLO Cal Fire website <http://www.calfireslo.org/>

### Dry Well Replacements

Environmental Health has been tracking dry well replacement applications since 2013 and the mapping of the sites is updated on a weekly basis.

### **County Public Outreach Actions:**

Information regarding current and upcoming drought relief programs for rural homeowners has been placed on the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage. Rural Development, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), delivers a number of programs to help improve the quality of life in rural communities throughout the nation. These programs may also help rural communities, businesses and individuals impacted by California's ongoing drought conditions. For additional resources and information on applying for any of these programs, please visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca> or the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage at [http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought\\_Update.htm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm).

In an effort to raise awareness about water supply issues the County continues to examine multiple channels of communication for water conservation outreach efforts. Check out our water-saving tips, shareable water saving images, and customized Tweets and Facebook posts just for you to share and help us continue the SLO County culture of conservation at the following link: [http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought\\_Update/water-conservation.htm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update/water-conservation.htm)

To report drought-related concerns or for water conservations questions, call the County Water Conservation and Drought Hotline at (805) 781-4466.

**DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**County of San Luis Obispo Drought Conditions and Water Conservation**  
([http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought\\_Update.htm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm))

**State's Water Conservation Campaign; Save our Water**  
([www.saveourh2o.org](http://www.saveourh2o.org))

**California's Drought Information Clearinghouse; Dought.CA.Gov**  
(<http://ca.gov/drought/>)

**California Department of Food and Agriculture; Drought information**  
([www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/))

**California Department of Water Resources; Current Water Conditions**  
([www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/](http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/))

**California State Water Resources Control Board; Water Rights, Drought Info and Actions**  
([www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml))

**California Department of Public Health; Drinking Water CDPH Drinking Water Program**  
([www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/dwp.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/dwp.aspx))

**USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information; USDA Programs**  
([http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER\\_ASSISTANCE](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER_ASSISTANCE))

**UC Cooperative Extension Drought Information Resources; Drought Information Resources**  
([http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought\\_Information/](http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought_Information/))

