



Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Management Plan

March 2011



Paso Robles Basin Groundwater Management Plan

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Basin	Paso Robles Groundwater Basin
BMOs	Basin Management Objectives
CASGEMs	California Statewide Groundwater Elevations Monitoring Program
CCVT	Central Coast Vineyard Team
City	City of Paso Robles
County	San Luis Obispo County
CSAs	County Service Areas
District	San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
DPH	California Department of Public Health (formerly Department of Health Services)
DPW	County Department of Public Works
DWR	California Department of Water Resources
GAC	Groundwater Advisory Committee
GMA	Groundwater Management Activities
GMP	Groundwater Management Plan
IRWMP	Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
M&I	Municipal and Industrial
MCWRA	Monterey County Water Resources Agency
MOU	Memorandums of Understanding
msl	mean sea level
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Plan	Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Management Plan
PRIOR	Paso Robles Imperiled Overlying Rights
PRWCA	Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance
RCS	Resource Capacity Study
RMS	Resource Management System
State	State of California
SWP	State Water Project

TDS	total dissolved solids
UWMP	Urban Water Management Plan
WRAC	Water Resource Advisory Committee
WPAs	Water Planning Areas

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Paso Robles Groundwater Basin (Basin) is located in northern San Luis Obispo County (County) and southern Monterey County and was described in the 1958 California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118, San Luis Obispo County Investigation. As part of the efforts to map the groundwater basins in the State of California (State) presented in Bulletin 118, DWR identified the Paso Robles Area Groundwater Subbasin of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin and designated it as Basin Number 3-4.06. The Basin boundary was later updated in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (2002) and is shown on Figure 1-1.

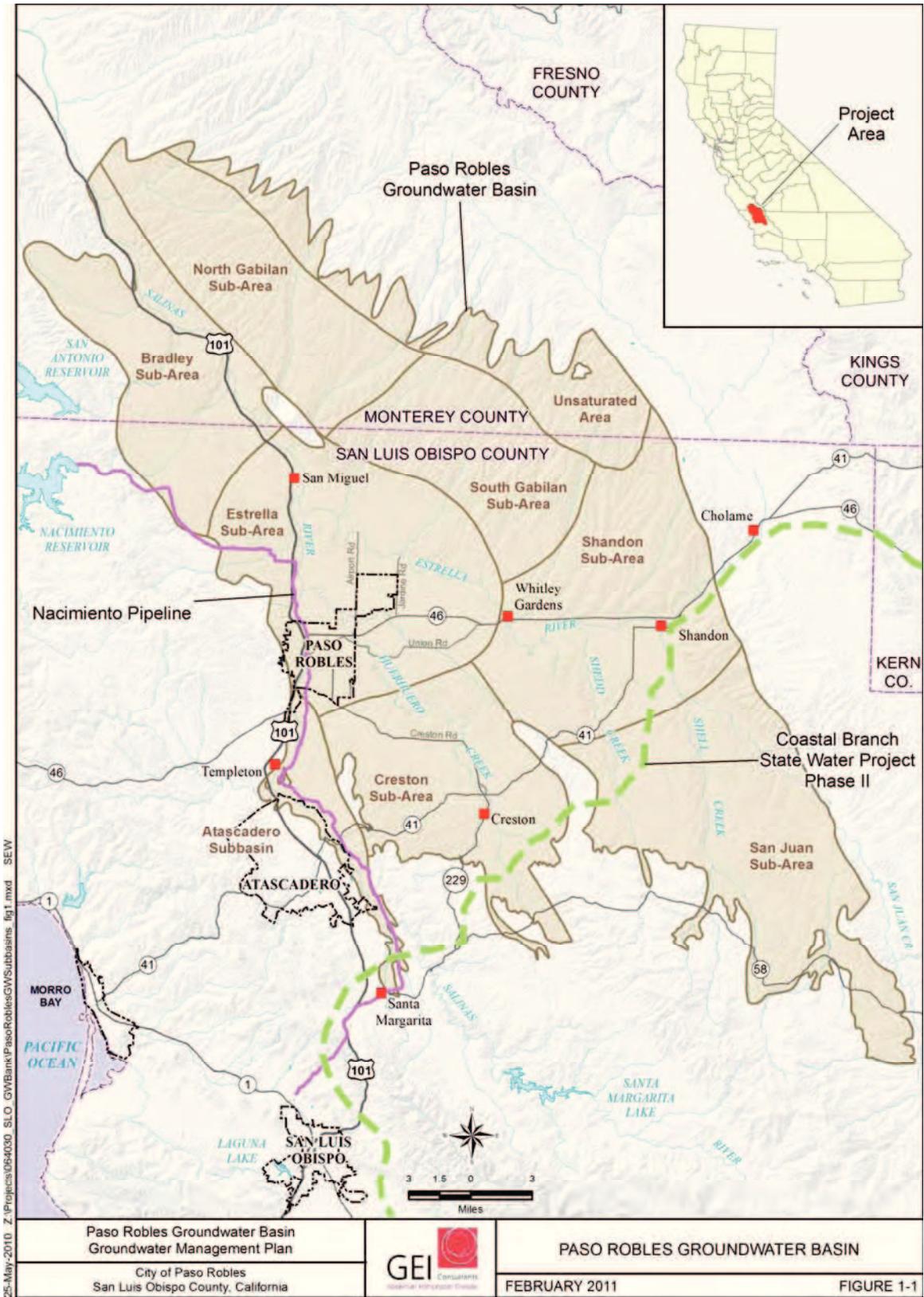
The Basin supplies water for 29 percent of the County's population and an estimated 40 percent of the agricultural production of the County. The municipal and industrial (M&I), domestic, and agricultural demands in the Basin currently rely exclusively on groundwater (including the underflow of streams). The M&I water demands include the cities of Paso Robles and Atascadero, the communities of Templeton, Shandon, Creston, and San Miguel, Bradley, Camp Roberts, and the small community systems in Whitley Gardens and Garden Farms. Individual domestic groundwater users and isolated subdivisions are located throughout the Basin, often in the more rural areas dispersed among the agricultural areas. Agricultural water users constitute an estimated 67 percent of the pumpage in the Basin and are concentrated on the alluvial valleys of the streams and rivers and along the Highway 46 corridor.

Over the past decade, the San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) and the City of Paso Robles (City) have worked with other pumpers in the Basin to begin a more organized approach to groundwater management as described in Section 2.

The Basin Study (Fugro, 2002) estimated the volume of groundwater storage along with basin inflows and outflows. These values were used to compile a hydrologic budget (water balance) and establish a perennial yield (also called the safe yield) for the Basin at 94,000 acre-feet per year. In 2005, the perennial yield was modified to 97,700 acre-feet per year based on additional analysis.

Based on a recent (Todd, 2007) monitoring report, the Basin was not at the safe yield although some areas were experiencing significant declines in groundwater elevations. A later study completed in 2009 suggests groundwater pumping was approaching the safe yield of the Basin, which led to the recommendation to do a groundwater management plan.

Figure 1-1. Paso Robles Groundwater Basin



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Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Groundwater Management Plan City of Paso Robles San Luis Obispo County, California	 <p>GEI Consultants Geological Engineering & Environmental Science</p>	PASO ROBLES GROUNDWATER BASIN FEBRUARY 2011
		FIGURE 1-1

The Resource Capacity Study prepared by the San Luis Obispo County Planning Department in November 2010 states that the Basin is near or at perennial yield, and contains land use and water use monitoring and conservation recommendations within the authority of the County and District to help ensure the sustainability of the Basin into the future.

The Paso Robles Basin Groundwater Management Plan was prepared coincident with the preparation of the Resource Capacity Study as well as other ongoing studies to develop a stakeholder-driven voluntary plan to provide a framework for future groundwater management activities. This project was funded by a grant from the Local Groundwater Assistance Act of 2000 (California Water Code Section 10795 et seq) to provide grants to public agencies to conduct groundwater studies or to carry out groundwater monitoring and management activities. Local Groundwater Assistance Grants (AB303) are awarded by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Funding was available in 2007-2008 for AB303 grants.

The purpose of this Plan is to develop a common understanding of the groundwater issues and management opportunities in the Basin and identify and support projects such as conjunctive use, recycled wastewater, and demand management, which will improve groundwater management. Following development of the Plan, the goal is to implement the activities identified in the Plan to achieve the Basin Management Objectives that are identified in the Plan. Figure 1-2 shows some of the interconnectivity of the groundwater management activities that are part of groundwater management planning and implementation. The approach illustrated in Figure 1-2 was applied during the development of this Plan.

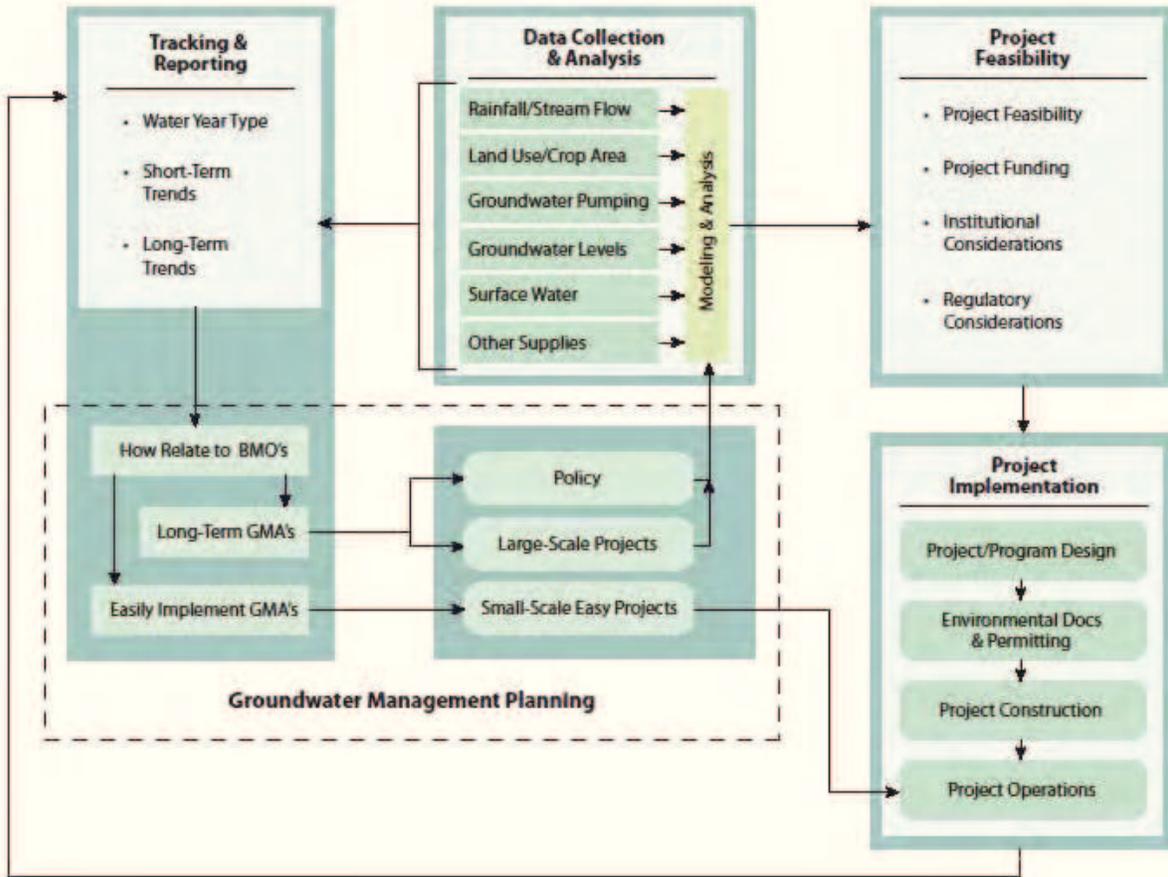
Groundwater management requires groundwater level and other data collected and analyzed on a routine basis (typically annually) to establish the current conditions of the groundwater basin. Groundwater data is tracked and reported to agencies, interested parties, and stakeholders.

This information is also used to establish groundwater management goals and objectives (referred to as Basin Management Objectives [BMOs]) and identify specific actions (referred to as Groundwater Management Activities [GMAs]).

Depending on the difficulty and complexity of GMAs, additional analysis may be needed to support their implementation. Relatively simple projects that are feasible and provide benefit may be able to be implemented easily, while more complex, large, expensive projects or projects that include multiple agencies may require additional analysis and studies to establish their feasibility and quantify their benefits.

The effects of these projects and other groundwater management activities are expected to result in changed groundwater conditions which are monitored and reported to the agencies, interested parties, and stakeholders.

Figure 1-2. Groundwater Management in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin



1.2 Regional Groundwater Management Plan Area

The Basin was first formally defined by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR, 1958). In 1979, the DWR published a detailed investigation of the San Luis Obispo County portion of the Basin (DWR, 1979).

The Basin encompasses an area of approximately 505,000 acres (790 square miles). The Basin ranges from the Garden Farms area south of Atascadero to San Ardo in Monterey County, and from the Highway 101 corridor east to Shandon (Figure 1-1). Most of the Basin is hydraulically connected by thick sedimentary sections. The Basin is divided into smaller subareas based on water quality, source of recharge, groundwater movement, and the contours of the base of permeable sediments.

The Atascadero Subbasin is defined as that portion of the Basin west of the Rinconada fault. Between Atascadero and Creston, the Rinconada fault juxtaposes less permeable Monterey Formation rocks with the Paso Robles Formation basin sediments. South of the City of Paso Robles, the Paso Robles Formation is found on both sides of the Rinconada fault; however, the fault zone is believed to form a leaky barrier that restricts flow from the Atascadero

Subbasin to the main part of the Basin. As a result of this, the Atascadero Subbasin is considered a hydrologically distinct subbasin within the Basin. The Rinconada Fault does not act as a hydraulic barrier to groundwater flow in the Salinas River Alluvium. As such, groundwater flow in the Alluvium is continuous along the stretch of the Salinas River that traverses the entire Basin. The Atascadero Subbasin encompasses the Salinas River corridor area south of Paso Robles and includes the communities of Garden Farms, Atascadero, and Templeton.

The western boundary of the Basin roughly follows Highway 101 from Santa Margarita northward to Hames Valley. The eastern boundary follows a rough line from Highway 58 in the San Juan Creek area northward to Shandon and Cholame. The Basin is downstream of and hydraulically connected by alluvial deposits to the Pozo Groundwater Basin south of the Basin, and to the Cholame Groundwater Basin north of the Basin. The Basin outlet is northwest and downstream of Bradley, where it is hydraulically connected with the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin.

The Basin was subdivided into subareas in the Phase I Report (Fugro, 2002) as a practical approach to organize the 790 square mile Basin into smaller informal areas (see Figure 1-1) and listed below.

1. Atascadero Subbasin
2. Creston Subarea
3. San Juan Subarea
4. Estrella Subarea
5. Shandon Subarea
6. North Gabilan Subarea
7. South Gabilan Subarea
8. Bradley Subarea

Just north of San Miguel there is an area of basement rock that extends to the ground surface that is not considered part of the groundwater basin. This area is located between the Estrella, North Gabilan, and Bradley Subareas, but is not considered to be part of any of them.

Near the edges of the Basin, the Paso Robles Formation becomes thin, and wells located in these areas may tap the Paso Robles Formation as well as basement rock. Because of this, wells tapping both the Paso Robles Formation and basement rocks may experience different groundwater level conditions than wells tapping only the Paso Robles Formation.

1.3 Existing Groundwater Management Activities

Since 1998, the local agencies and local stakeholders via a public “North County Water Forum” including Monterey County Water Resources Agency have worked in cooperation to complete several projects to support the technical investigations and improve groundwater management in the Basin. These efforts, listed below, demonstrate the interest, support, and

continuing commitment of the individual agencies, stakeholders, and interested parties in protecting the Basin’s groundwater resources. Much of the information developed in the efforts was incorporated into the Plan.

- Master County Water Plan (EDAW, 1998)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (Fugro West, 2002)
- Monitoring Program Evaluation (Cleath & Associates, 2003)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study Phase II –Numerical Model Development, Calibration, and Application (Fugro West , 2005)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Agreement (2005)
- San Luis Obispo County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, 2005)
- City of Paso Robles Urban Water Management Plan (Todd Engineers,2007)
- City of Paso Robles Water Resources Plan Integration and Capital Improvement Program (T.J. Cross Engineers, 2007)
- Annual Report on the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin (Todd Engineers, 2007)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Water Banking Feasibility Study (GEI Consultants, Inc., 2007)
- Evaluation of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Pumping – Water Year 2006 (Todd Engineers, 2009)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Water Balance Review and Update (Fugro, 2010)
- San Luis Obispo County Master Water Plan (Wallace Group,2010, ongoing)
- Peer Review of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Studies (Gus Yates, 2010)
- Revised Resource Capacity Study – Water Supply in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin (San Luis Obispo County Planning Department, 2011)

Each of these groundwater management activities is described below.

1.3.1 Master County Water Plan (1998)

This update of the Master Water Plan evaluated 12 distinct “Water Planning Areas” throughout the County, tabulating water demand and published yields of developed water sources for each area. The result of this effort was an overall inventory of how demand matched supply throughout the County, noting priorities for development of supply projects and guidance for the pace of building permit issuance. This proved to be the foundation document that pointed to the need to further study the County’s largest water supply – the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin.

1.3.2 Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (2002)

In 2002, the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (Basin Study) investigated the hydrogeologic conditions and quantified the water supply capability of the Basin by defining the lateral and vertical extent of the aquifer, groundwater flow and movement, and current water quality conditions. The Basin Study identified the subareas within the Basin and local hydrogeologic settings based upon water quality, source of recharge, groundwater movement, and basin depth.

The Basin Study estimated the volume of groundwater storage along with basin inflows and outflows. These values were used to compile a hydrologic budget (water balance) and establish a perennial yield for the Basin of 94,000 acre-feet per year. Demand at the time was estimated at 82,600 acre-feet per year and is predominantly agricultural demand. The author recommended the development of a numerical groundwater model (described below) to evaluate future hydraulic conditions.

1.3.3 Paso Robles Groundwater Monitoring Program Evaluation (2003)

The County has been monitoring groundwater levels for more than 40 years in the Basin. The Monitoring Program Evaluation was completed to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the County's Groundwater Level Monitoring Program for wells located in the Basin. Based on the final report of the 154 wells in the program, County Public Works employees monitor 99 wells, and 55 wells are monitored by local municipal water company employees (who forward the data to the County's Public Works Department for inclusion in the monitoring program database). The report provides several recommendations for improving the groundwater level measuring program.

1.3.4 Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study Phase II – Numerical Model Development, Calibration, and Application (2005)

In 2005, a numerical groundwater flow model was developed as a quantitative tool to evaluate future hydraulic conditions of the Basin. The model was used to refine uncertainties in the hydrologic budget and evaluate the Basin's response to current and future water demands with and without supplemental water, including areas of declining water levels. In 2007, the model was used in the Water Banking Feasibility Study (described below) to evaluate potential recharge and water banking projects and identify management practices that could be employed to optimize water use. This effort revised the Basin perennial yield estimate to 97,700 acre-feet per year.

1.3.5 Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Agreement (2005)

The Agreement was entered into on August 19, 2005 by the District, several overlying landowners who have organized as the Paso Robles Imperiled Overlying Rights (PRIOR) group, and the City of Paso Robles and County Service Area No. 16 (collectively referred to as Municipal Users). Since 2005, additional overlying landowners and the San Miguel Community Services District, as a Municipal User, have also signed the Agreement. The Agreement requires the District to declare the Basin to be in a state of overdraft, when appropriate, at which point a period of time is conferred to allowing overlying landowners sufficient time to react to such

a declaration. In the Agreement, the District serves as the technical advisor to both the Landowners and Municipal Users.

The Agreement recognizes the need for monitoring and appropriate management of the existing Basin supplies and also recognizes that bringing additional water resources to the Basin could delay or avoid entirely the Basin becoming overdrafted in the future. The Agreement also recognizes signatories' desire to preserve their respective groundwater rights, notwithstanding implementation of any management measures, thereby providing the framework for cooperation among the Landowners and Municipal Users to participate in the development of a groundwater management plan.

1.3.6 San Luis Obispo County Region Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (2007)

The District, in cooperation with the District's Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC), prepared the Region's Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) to align water resources management planning efforts for achieving sustainable water resources Countywide with the State planning efforts through 2030. The IRWMP was used to support the Region's water resource management planning and submittal of grant applications to fund these efforts. The IRWMP established specific goals and objectives to achieve water resources sustainability. The IRWMP integrated 19 different water management strategies that have or will have a role in protecting the region's water supply reliability, water quality, ecosystems, groundwater, and flood management objectives. The integration of these strategies resulted in a list of action items (projects, programs, and studies) needed to implement the IRWMP. District staff and the WRAC Integrated Regional Water Management Subcommittee prioritized the action items. The IRWMP was adopted in December 2005 and updated in July 2007.

The IRWMP identified the following groundwater monitoring and management objectives that are intended to ensure the region's groundwater resources remain suitable for continued use.

- Continue monitoring and reporting programs for groundwater basins in the region.
- Evaluate and consider groundwater banking programs.
- Protect and improve groundwater quality from point and non-point sources of pollution.
- Conduct public education and outreach regarding groundwater protection.
- Identify areas of known or expected conflicts and target stakeholders on specific actions that they should take to help protect groundwater basin quality and supply.
- Recharge groundwater with high-quality water.

The groundwater management objectives and strategies presented for the Region in the IRWMP will be used to guide the development of the Groundwater Management Plan for the Basin.

1.3.7 City of Paso Robles Urban Water Management Plan (2007)

The Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) supported the IRWMP by describing the City's current and future water demands, identifying current water supply sources, and assessing supply reliability for the City. The UWMP describes the City's reliance on groundwater and its support of efforts to avoid overdraft by developing additional sources. These sources include water conservation, surface water from Lake Nacimiento, and the use of recycled water for irrigation. The Plan identifies beneficial impacts to groundwater quality through the use of these sources.

1.3.8 Water Resources Plan Integration and Capital Improvement Program (2007)

The City prepared the integrated plan at the conclusion of eight significant water resource reports prepared on the City's behalf. The integrated plan is a sequencing of the recommended actions from the eight individual plans, accompanied by a capital improvement program to provide funding. This document captures the City's overall water resource goals and identifies a self-sustaining water resource portfolio for the City, along with steps necessary to build that portfolio. The Plan reinforced the need for the City to secure entitlement of water from the Nacimiento Water Project. The City's decade long involvement in the Nacimiento Water Project culminated in 2004 when the City secured the entitlement to 4,000 acre-feet per year from the Nacimiento Water Project. Since then, the City has embarked on design of a water treatment plant in 2007, developed a private well policy in 2007, and is poised to upgrade the City's wastewater treatment plant to facilitate water recycling efforts.

1.3.9 Annual Report on the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin (2007)

The Annual Report on the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin (Annual Report) was prepared in 2007 to continue to monitor and evaluate groundwater conditions in order to delay or avoid Basin overdraft. The Annual Report provides an update of the rainfall, groundwater levels and storage, and groundwater management planning for the 1997 to 2006 period that has taken place since the completion of the Basin Study (Phase I Report) in 2002, which included the 1981 to 1997 period.

During the 1997 to 2006 period, this report estimated that groundwater storage declined by about 29,800 acre-feet (about 3,300 acre-feet per year). Recommendations from the Annual Report include continuing the cooperative efforts to improve groundwater level monitoring and updating the groundwater pumping estimates from the Phase I report.

1.3.10 Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Water Banking Feasibility Study (2007)

The Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Water Banking Feasibility Study (Feasibility Study) was identified as an "A1" priority project in the County's IRWMP and was undertaken by the District to determine the feasibility of banking available State Water Project (SWP) supplies in order to improve the overall water supply reliability in the County. This investigation is important to the region because it evaluates opportunities to more fully utilize the unused portion of the District's 25,000 acre-feet per year SWP supply, which could

improve local groundwater conditions, increase dry-year water supplies, improve local groundwater quality, provide greater flexibility in groundwater management, and reduce the dependence on imported water supplies in below normal years.

The primary purpose of the Feasibility Study was to determine the technical feasibility of a recharge or water banking project in the Basin. The technical feasibility was based on the local hydrogeologic suitability and engineering feasibility. Additional groundwater management and operational considerations as well as environmental and permitting issues were also identified. Three potential recharge areas were evaluated separately for both recharge and water banking alternatives. Two of the areas may provide opportunities for recharge or water banking operations. The Feasibility Study was only based on physical feasibility and design. Institutional and cost considerations would need to also be addressed to determine if the project should be implemented in those locations.

Some of the groundwater management related recommendations from this project included:

1. Preparing a groundwater management plan to provide a framework for managing the Basin and establishing Basin Management Objectives.
2. Continue the District's annual groundwater monitoring plan to track changes in groundwater levels and quality.
3. Installing dedicated monitoring wells, as needed, to fill data gaps.

1.3.11 Evaluation of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Pumping – Water Year 2006 (2009)

This report updates the pumping estimate from the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (Basin Study), which provided estimates of pumping for water years 1997 and 2000.

This report utilized land use, population, well production, well locations, and water demand information to estimate the 2006 groundwater pumping by use sector including agricultural, urban, small water systems, and rural groundwater use for the different subareas within the Basin. The estimated groundwater pumping in 2006 totaled 88,154 acre-feet, about 90 percent of the estimated perennial yield (97,700 acre-feet) for the entire Basin. Pumping within the Atascadero Subbasin in 2006 totaled 15,532 acre-feet, about 94 percent of the estimated perennial yield (16,400 acre-feet).

A new estimate of projected groundwater pumping in 2025 was made based upon this information. The annual groundwater pumping projected for 2025 totaled 107,779 acre-feet (adjusted for gross agricultural pumping), about 110 percent of the perennial yield.

1.3.12 Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Water Balance Review and Update (2010)

This report provides an update of the water balance for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin and the Atascadero Subbasin for the water years 1998 to 2009, as well as an analysis of the effect of importing water on the water balance for both the Basin and Subbasin for the future period of 2010 to 2025.

The water balance calculations presented in the report show that demand in both the Atascadero Subbasin and the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin as a whole is approaching the average annual perennial yield. The results of this study suggest that future groundwater storage investigations should evaluate the groundwater storage separately for the three different aquifer regimes (shallow alluvial aquifers, the Paso Robles Formation in the Subbasin, and the Paso Robles Formation within the entire Basin). This study reinforces the need for the implementation of an effective monitoring plan to further improve the understanding of the relationships between the aquifer regimes and support improved groundwater management in the Basin.

1.3.13 San Luis Obispo County Master Water Plan (2010, ongoing)

The purpose of the County Master Water Plan is to present a complete picture of the water resources management in San Luis Obispo County and how the practices (i.e., water use, policy adoption, planning, and project implementation) of all the entities within the County influence each other with respect to water resources. This ongoing project separates the County into three sub-regions (North Coast, South Coast, and Inland) and further divides them into sub-regional Water Planning Areas (WPAs) that were formed in consideration of physical boundaries such as groundwater basins and watershed and jurisdictional boundaries. Information is summarized in the Master Water Plan for the WPAs.

Technical Memorandum No. 3 titled ‘Task C.3 Water Supply Inventory and Assessment- Water Supply, Demand, and Water Quality provides a draft summary of the existing and projected water demands and supplies within the County for local purveyors. The Paso Robles Groundwater Basin is included within WPA 13 and 14 within the Inland Sub-Region.

1.3.14 Peer Review of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Studies

An independent review of the groundwater basin studies was prepared to compare some approaches and conclusions of previous reports regarding the status of the conditions in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. A total of five reports were reviewed as part of the peer review, which included a more detailed comparison of the Todd 2009 Report and the Fugro 2010 Report. The Todd report found declines in the basin and subbasin storage between the 2000 and 2006. The peer review concluded that groundwater pumping was nearing the perennial yield, and those efforts to supplement the groundwater supplies will help to maintain the balance. The peer review recommended several courses of action that included:

- Continuing to monitor groundwater levels across the Basin and improve monitoring in areas not currently covered in the County’s water level monitoring program.
- Update and enhance the groundwater flow model.
- Secure supplemental water supplies to reduce groundwater pumping.
- Support cooperative groundwater management in the Basin.

1.3.15 Revised Resource Capacity Study – Water Supply in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin

The Resource Capacity Study (RCS) addresses the state of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin based on work already completed, which included:

- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (Fugro, 2002)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study Phase II – Numerical Model Development, Calibration, and Application (Fugro, 2005)
- Evaluation of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Pumping – Water Year 2006 (Todd, 2009)
- Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Water Balance Review and Update (Fugro, 2010)

These studies have calculated the water use by major water use sectors (agriculture, rural land uses, small commercial uses, municipal systems, and small community systems). The results of these studies show that groundwater use has increased during the 1980 to 2009 period to the point where the Basin outflows (including groundwater pumping) will soon be greater than Basin inflows (recharge).

The County's Resource Management System (RMS) provides a mechanism for ensuring a balance between land development and the resources necessary to sustain such development. When a resource deficiency becomes apparent, efforts are made to determine how the resource capacity might be expanded, where conservation measures could be introduced to extend the availability of the unused capacity, or where development should be limited or redirected to areas with remaining resource capacity.

The RMS uses three levels of severity designations from Level of Severity I (least severe) to Level of Severity III (most severe) based on the rate of depletion and an estimate of the remaining capacity, if any. The Levels of Severity for water supply are summarized below:

1. **LOS I:** Level I is reached for a water resource when increasing water demand projected over nine years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply.
2. **LOS II:** Level II for a water resource occurs when water demand projected over seven years (or other lead time determined by a resource capacity study) equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply.
3. **LOS III:** A Level of Severity III exists when water demand equals the available resource; the amount of consumption has reached the dependable supply of the resource.

According to the above designation, an LOS III can be established if a basin has reached its perennial yield *or dependable supply will be depleted before new supplies are developed* (emphasis added in RCS). The January RCS recommends a Level of Severity III for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin and a level of Severity I for the Atascadero Basin.

The RCS also recommended actions to include:

- Water conservation measures that will lead to more efficient water use.
- Land use controls that will reduce conflicts over the limited groundwater resource.

The RCS also recognizes the following important decision-making constraints, which complicate any action the County may wish to take:

- The County has a limited regulatory role in water use, especially by cities and agriculture. Therefore it will be difficult for the County to directly affect the use of water by the two primary groundwater users.
- The County's primary regulatory role is land use regulation and building permit issuance.
- The major portion of the basin outflows are not measured, but are estimated. While municipal pumping is measured, agricultural, rural, and small community/commercial pumping is estimated. This adds uncertainty regarding actual groundwater use.
- Identification of changing groundwater levels is based on somewhat limited data.

Because the County's primary regulatory role is land use regulation and issuance of building permits, it had developed recommended actions that emphasize this regulatory role. These actions are consistent with the County's General Plan in the Conservation and Open Space Element and the Agricultural Element.