COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL

(1) DEPARTMENT	(2) MEETING DATE	(3) CONTACT/PHONE
Planning and Building	January 29, 2008	Mike Wulkan, Supervising Planner, (805) 781-5608

(4) SUBJECT
Status report on Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) changes, related growth management strategies and Countywide Rural Plan concept

(5) SUMMARY OF REQUEST
This item consists of two reports. Report A is a status report to your Board regarding direction for possible changes to the Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) and related growth management strategies. Your Board's direction to staff in May 2007 was to study improvements in the GMO's operational efficiency and its consistency with the Resource Management System (RMS). Report B describes staff's proposal for the Countywide Rural Plan, a new consolidated land use plan for the rural parts of the county.
Supervisorial Districts: All

(6) RECOMMENDED ACTION
Staff recommends that your Board take the following actions:
1. Receive and file these reports;
2. Direct staff to return with growth management strategies for your consideration within 6 months;
3. Consider this proposal for a Countywide Rural Plan and direct staff to return for authorization in Fiscal Year 2008-2009.

(7) FUNDING SOURCE(S)	(8) CURRENT YEAR COST	(9) ANNUAL COST	(10) BUDGETED?
Department budget	N/A	N/A	☐ No ☒ Yes ☐ N/A

(11) OTHER AGENCY/ADVISORY GROUP INVOLVEMENT (LIST):
Elements of the growth management strategies discussed in this report have been discussed with the Air Pollution Control District, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, the Public Works Department, and city planning directors.

(12) WILL REQUEST REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STAFF? ☒ No ☐ Yes, How Many? _____
☐ Permanent ____ ☐ Limited Term ____ ☐ Contract ____ ☐ Temporary Help ____

(13) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S)	(14) LOCATION MAP	(15) Maddy Act Appointments Signed-off by Clerk of the Board
☐ 1st, ☐ 2nd, ☐ 3rd, ☐ 4th, ☐ 5th, ☒ All	☒ Attached ☐ N/A	N/A

(16) AGENDA PLACEMENT	(17) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS
☐ Consent ☐ Hearing (Time Est. _)	☐ Resolutions (Orig + 4 copies) ☐ Contracts (Orig + 4 copies)
☐ Presentation ☒ Board Business (Time Est. 40 min)	☐ Ordinances (Orig + 4 copies) ☒ N/A

(18) NEED EXTRA EXECUTED COPIES?	(19) APPROPRIATION TRANSFER REQUIRED?
☐ Number: _____ ☐ Attached ☒ N/A	☐ Submitted ☐ 4/5th's Vote Required ☒ N/A

(20) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR)	(21) W-9	(22) Agenda Item History
N/A	☒ No ☐ Yes	☐ N/A Date: 5/15/07

(23) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW Vincent Man

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

VICTOR HOLANDA, AICP
DIRECTOR

DATE: **JANUARY 29, 2008**

TO: **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

FROM: **JAMES CARUSO, SENIOR PLANNER,**
MIKE WULKAN, SUPERVISING PLANNER

VIA: **CHUCK STEVENSON, AICP, DIVISION MANAGER, LONG RANGE PLANNING**

SUBJECT: **STATUS REPORT ON GROWTH MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE (GMO) CHANGES, RELATED GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND COUNTYWIDE RURAL PLAN CONCEPT**

This memo contains two reports. Report A is a status report to your Board regarding direction for possible changes to the Growth Management Ordinance and related growth management strategies. Report B describes staff's proposal for the Countywide Rural Plan, a new consolidated land use plan for the rural parts of the county. Recommendations and summaries for each proposal follow. Detailed discussions, as well as descriptions of agency involvement, financial considerations and results are contained in each report.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that your Board take the following actions:

1. Receive and file these reports;

2. Direct staff to return with growth management strategies for your consideration within 6 months;

3. Consider this proposal for a Countywide Rural Plan and direct staff to return for authorization in Fiscal Year 2008-2009.

DISCUSSION

Summary

Report A: Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) Changes and Related Growth Management Strategies
In May 2007, your Board directed staff to study improvements in the Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) operational efficiency and its consistency with the Resource Management System (RMS):

> *"...the Board directs staff to develop future ordinance amendments for the Board's consideration that will improve the operational efficiency of, and be more consistent with, the Resource Management System* and RESOLUTION NO. 2007-188, resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Luis Obispo approving the proposed growth rate and carry over of 10% of the maximum allotment from the previous year for use in Fiscal Year 07-08, resulting in an additional 1099 units Countywide, adopted".

The Board's action also included the following six items as direction to staff to develop draft recommendations for consideration of possible future ordinance amendments:

1. Streamline the accounting and "list management" systems to be more cost effective and to better reflect the Growth Management Ordinance. Continue to move the management of the Growth Management Ordinance from the County's "mainframe" computer to the Department's "Tidemark system" to allow greater access and efficiency.

2. Further simplify the Growth Management Ordinance and accounting systems for better understanding and efficiency.

3. Explore better integration of the Resource Management System and the Growth Management Ordinance to more closely link anticipated resource needs and shortages with financing alternatives and planning efforts.

4. Presently, affordable housing and secondary dwellings are exempt. Staff will research the idea of adding other types of housing as exemptions to the Growth Management Ordinance such as residential mixed use projects in commercially zoned areas where housing is secondary and subordinate to the primary commercial use.

5. Presently, there is little incentive to build within established urban areas and this leads to sprawl in rural and agricultural areas. Explore ways to better link the Growth Management Ordinance with smart growth principles. Research ways to encourage and help direct growth into urban areas where municipal facilities, jobs, schools, stores and entertainment facilities are generally located. Research ways that growth management could be employed to slow the rate of breakdown of rural land that leads to further intensification of rural development in less appropriate areas.

6. Clean up outdated references and technical information.

The administrative portions of the work, such as streamlining and computer system changes (preceding items 1, 2 and 6), are either completed or will be completed by May 2008 when the Department brings the proposed GMO changes to your Board. This report identifies shorter and longer-term strategies to address the remaining directives regarding linking growth management with resources and smart growth principles, directing growth into urban areas, and slowing down inappropriate rural development (preceding items 3, 4 and 5).

Report B: Countywide Rural Plan
Earlier this year, staff shared with your Board the idea of a new, consolidated land use plan for the rural parts of the county. Staff has developed the idea further, and our proposal is described in more detail in this report. The basic concept is to consolidate individual area plans (15 total) into a more unified rural area plan. Sub-regional planning policies and standards will remain to address North County, South County and coastal area distinctions. The Countywide Rural Plan would focus on promoting policies that protect agriculture and important biological habitats, encourage growth in urban areas and take a more regional approach to growth, and better linking land use and transportation. In addition, watershed protection and planning policies will take on a more significant role in land use planning. Staff is now prepared to proceed with this proposal, which will be presented as part of the Department's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2008-2009.

REPORT A: GROWTH MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE (GMO) CHANGES AND RELATED GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Threat of Current Growth Trends

San Luis Obispo County offers a level of beauty from its mountains, agricultural lands, wine country, valleys, beaches, lakes and distinctive cities that is unsurpassed in the state. However, cities and towns in the county have seen substantial growth in the past two decades that may have outpaced the financial capacity or ability to provide adequate water resources, municipal infrastructure and transportation system improvements. In the absence of new growth strategies, new development may occur in significant amounts in rural areas, which could pose threats to the County's rural qualities in the coming years.

Consider the following building permit data for new dwellings from 2000 to 2007:

Building permits finaled in rural area:	2,868 (40% of the unincorporated area total)
Building permits finaled in urban area:	4,353 (60% of the unincorporated area total)

The percentage of rural growth will very likely rise, because development in urban areas has become constrained by water supply, infrastructure cost and financing difficulties. At the same time, rural residential development is often not constrained by these factors. It is often easier and in some instances possibly less expensive to develop in rural than in urban areas. With thousands of existing legal lots throughout the rural areas of the county, the resulting development could produce undesired results in the next ten years.

Potential threats resulting from an increasing percentage of rural area growth include: loss of rural character and community distinctiveness, loss of production agricultural lands, diminished natural resources, increased vehicle miles traveled, reduced air quality, a greater jobs and housing imbalance, reduced visitors and tourists, and increased public service demands accompanied by limited staffing and a limited budget. Continuation of current policies and growth trends will hamper the ability to meet State and County goals regarding greenhouse gas reduction, air quality protection, energy and water conservation, reduced vehicle miles traveled, and well-planned communities.

The following figures indicate the potential growth in rural and urban areas. Additional growth could result from further subdivision and development of many existing developed and undeveloped parcels.

Number of rural parcels: 24,000	Number still undeveloped: 12,000
Number of urban parcels: 43,000	Number still undeveloped: 15,000

Roughly the same numbers of undeveloped parcels exist in the rural area as in the urban areas of the county. It is important to note that of the roughly 12,000 undeveloped rural parcels, many could be further subdivided into smaller parcels under current land use rules. As an example, 1,250 new lots were created in the rural areas between 2000 and 2007. In addition, there are many underlying lots created by old deeds that the County is unaware of until Certificates of Compliance are applied for.

Staff believes that it may be possible to avoid or delay the preceding threats with improvements to the Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) and the Resource Management System (RMS), together with related growth management strategies. Those improvements and strategies are discussed in the following section. For background, the GMO was first adopted in 1990. Adoption of such an ordinance was one of several recommendations made in 1989 by the "Blue Ribbon" Growth Management Advisory Committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors (see Attachment 1).

Board directives

In May 2007, your Board directed staff to study improvements in the GMO regarding consistency with the RMS. In addition, your Board directed staff to address the following items:

1. *Streamline the accounting and "list management" systems to be more cost-effective and to better reflect the Growth Management Ordinance. Continue to move the management of the Growth Management of the Growth Management Ordinance from the County's "mainframe" computer to the Department's "Tidemark system" to allow greater access and efficiency.*

2. *Further simplify the Growth Management Ordinance and accounting systems for better understanding and efficiency.*

6. *Clean-up of outdated references and technical information*

   In response to these three items, effective July 1, 2007, management of the GMO was moved from the County's "mainframe" computer to the Department's "Tidemark system". The Department is working with the Information Technology Department to eliminate the Department's final remaining "mainframe" use (nightly transfer of data between Planning and Building and the Assessor's Office), resulting in an estimated Department cost savings of approximately $180,000 per fiscal year. No Board action is required.

   Staff is preparing a preliminary draft of the revised GMO, in which outdated references and technical information are cleaned up and text is revised for better

understanding by our customers, resulting in better efficiency for ordinance administration. The Department will bring the final draft to your Board in May 2008 for review and comment. No Board action is required.

3. *Explore better integration of the Resource Management System and the Growth Management Ordinance to more closely link anticipated resource needs and shortages with financing alternatives and planning efforts.*

   The RMS and GMO can be amended to work in concert. This could help address resource deficiencies in a more timely and effective manner, including situations like the four groundwater basins that are at RMS Level of Severity III. Staff could develop an integrated RMS/GMO program to react to these resource concerns well in advance of a crisis situation. For example, certain Levels of Severity could trigger specific growth management and planning measures, such as reducing growth rates, limiting the creation of new parcels in areas with constrained resources, reallocating growth to areas without resource deficiencies, and implementing financing measures to alleviate the resource constraints.

4. *Presently, affordable housing and secondary dwellings are exempt. Staff will research the idea of adding other types of housing as exemptions to the Growth Management Ordinance such as residential mixed use projects in commercially zoned areas where housing is secondary and subordinate to the primary commercial use.*

   Possible exemptions to the GMO could include residential mixed-use projects in the Commercial Retail and Office and Professional land use categories, higher density multi-family projects in communities with adequate water resources, infrastructure and services, and other projects meeting smart growth criteria. An alternative is to allocate a percentage of the annual countywide growth allocation to such projects.

5. *Presently, there is little incentive to build within established urban areas, and this leads to sprawl in rural and agricultural areas. Explore ways to better link the Growth Management Ordinance with smart growth principles. Research ways to encourage and help direct growth into urban areas where municipal facilities, jobs, schools, stores and entertainment facilities are generally located. Research ways that growth management could be employed to slow the rate of breakdown of rural land that leads to further intensification of rural development in less appropriate areas.*

Staff has developed a matrix (see Table 1) of possible measures for your Board's consideration that will provide consistency between the goals of the GMO and RMS and will address preceding items 3, 4 and 5. The matrix of possible measures is separated into rural and urban measures and measures that affect both areas, and includes several shorter-term and longer-term measures. The measures are consistent with existing policies and new state laws that have the effect of encouraging additional population growth to be directed towards urban areas and away from rural areas.

In Table 1, shorter-term measures include exempting certain smart growth projects from the GMO, taking into account Levels of Severity in setting growth rates and allocating growth to areas with sufficient resources, discouraging inappropriate rural growth. Longer-term measures include re-examining the RMS, including the level of severity time frames in order to trigger more timely actions, addressing antiquated subdivisions, and considering a lot retirement program for urban expansion areas. To be effective, land use strategies to help direct growth to urbanized areas must also be coupled with feasible financial strategies to allow for resource and infrastructure needs required to support that growth. Therefore, an essential growth management strategy is to create an infrastructure planning, development and financing program in collaboration with affected county departments, cities, special districts, and other agencies. Additional measures are expected to be recommended in association with general plan updates such as the Conservation/Open Space Element and the proposed Countywide Rural Plan (discussed in Part B of this report).

Table 1: Possible measures for GMO, RMS and Growth Management

URBAN MEASURES	URBAN/RURAL	RURAL MEASURES
Exempt smart growth projects from the GMO, or allocate a percentage of growth allocations to such projects	Retool the RMS so that Levels of Severity trigger specific growth management and planning measures in a timely manner	Reduce the rural area growth rate
Increase growth rates in appropriate urban areas	Retool the RMS to address rural use of groundwater basins	Limit the number of new parcels in rural areas
Modify Lot Consolidation regulations to encourage infill development	Limit inappropriate development of antiquated subdivisions	Require rural lot retirement for urban expansion areas
Increase the GMO allocation in appropriate urban areas	Facilitate development of certain antiquated subdivisions, providing appropriate land uses, infrastructure, services	Create an infrastructure planning, development and financing program
Streamline permitting for urban infill projects	Require rural lot retirement for urban expansion areas	Limit inappropriate development of antiquated subdivisions
Create an infrastructure planning, development and financing program	Create an infrastructure planning, development and financing program	

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Elements of the strategies discussed in this report have been discussed with the Air Pollution Control District, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, the Public Works Department, and city planning directors.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Department utilizes staff within current and limited budget resources to prepare this and other related reports to advise your Board. While important, potential follow-up tasks will continue to take increasing amounts of time and for this reason will compete with the processing of other priority projects that your Board has directed to be done, for example the Conservation/Open Space Element, the Annual Resource Summary Report and needed follow-up resource capacity studies.

RESULTS

The staff recommendation will result in the preparation of detailed growth management strategies linking growth management with resources and smart growth principles, directing growth into urban areas, and slowing down inappropriate rural development. These strategies will prepare decision-makers to respond to the need to shift land use and development patterns, consistent with existing policies. If successfully implemented, these strategies can help meet goals regarding greenhouse gas reduction, air quality protection, energy and water conservation, reduced vehicle miles traveled, and well-planned communities. Such communities with in-place infrastructure can result in less expensive public services, an adequate supply of housing that is more affordable, head-of-household jobs located near housing, reduced commuting, enhanced local economies, better air quality, healthier communities, and a higher quality of life.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Recommendations from the 1989 Growth Management Report: "Growth Management Strategies and Policies for the Future for San Luis Obispo County

REPORT B: COUNTYWIDE RURAL PLAN

Why do we need a new planning approach?

A Countywide Rural Plan for the unincorporated areas would simplify the County General Plan by reducing the number of overlapping and redundant policies and standards that are common in many of the area plans, reduce time and costs for updating plans, and enhance the readability of the General Plan. In addition, while many individual area plans have been updated over the years, a comprehensive review and update of the Land use Element and its organization has not occurred since it was originally adopted in 1981. In practice, updating areas plans has taken much longer and cost more than was envisioned when the area plan concept was adopted. Staff also believes a revision is needed to more effectively deal with countywide growth and resource-related issues. The proposed update would focus on the rural areas of the county and recommend policies that address region-based issues such as the relationship of land use and circulation; protection of agricultural lands, watersheds and important biological habitats; location of jobs and housing closer to each other; and other region-based issues that the current system does not or cannot address.

Trends
In recent years, there has been a substantial amount of new development, creation of new lots in the rural areas of the county, and recognition of hundreds of lots created by deed conveyance before enactment of subdivision regulations. Over the next 20 years, population in the unincorporated portion of the county could increase by approximately 45,000 people, an increase of about 45 percent. If current water resource constraints and costly infrastructure trends continue for towns and cities, it is expected that a large portion of future residents will chose or be forced to settle in the rural areas of the county where such issues do not deter growth. At the same time, much of the rural area lacks adequate services such as maintained roads, schools, stores and employment areas needed to support such development. Increased rural development will conflict with adopted growth principles that encourage directing development into existing communities, and with new laws aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions caused mainly from vehicles.

Growth constraints
Development throughout the county, including development in urban areas, is likely to encounter further resource and infrastructure constraints in the future. For example, a depleting water supply is a concern in many areas of the county. Four groundwater basins that cover large areas of the county already meet the criteria for Level of Severity III—the most critical level—under the county's Resource Management System. In addition, within 20 years, many cities, unincorporated towns and some rural areas could either be approaching or have exceeded general plan buildout or water supply capacities (see Table 2 and Figure 1). For example, by 2020, six of the seven cities, six unincorporated urban areas and several rural areas could reach or exceed 80 percent of general plan buildout. Several of those areas are also experiencing resource limitations, especially water supply. Such resource and buildout limitations, together with infrastructure constraints, could cause further increased growth pressures in rural areas, putting strain on agricultural, open space and natural resources. How is additional

growth going to be managed in a way that fosters smart growth, protects agriculture and natural resources, accommodates housing, and promotes economic development, all in a sustainable manner?

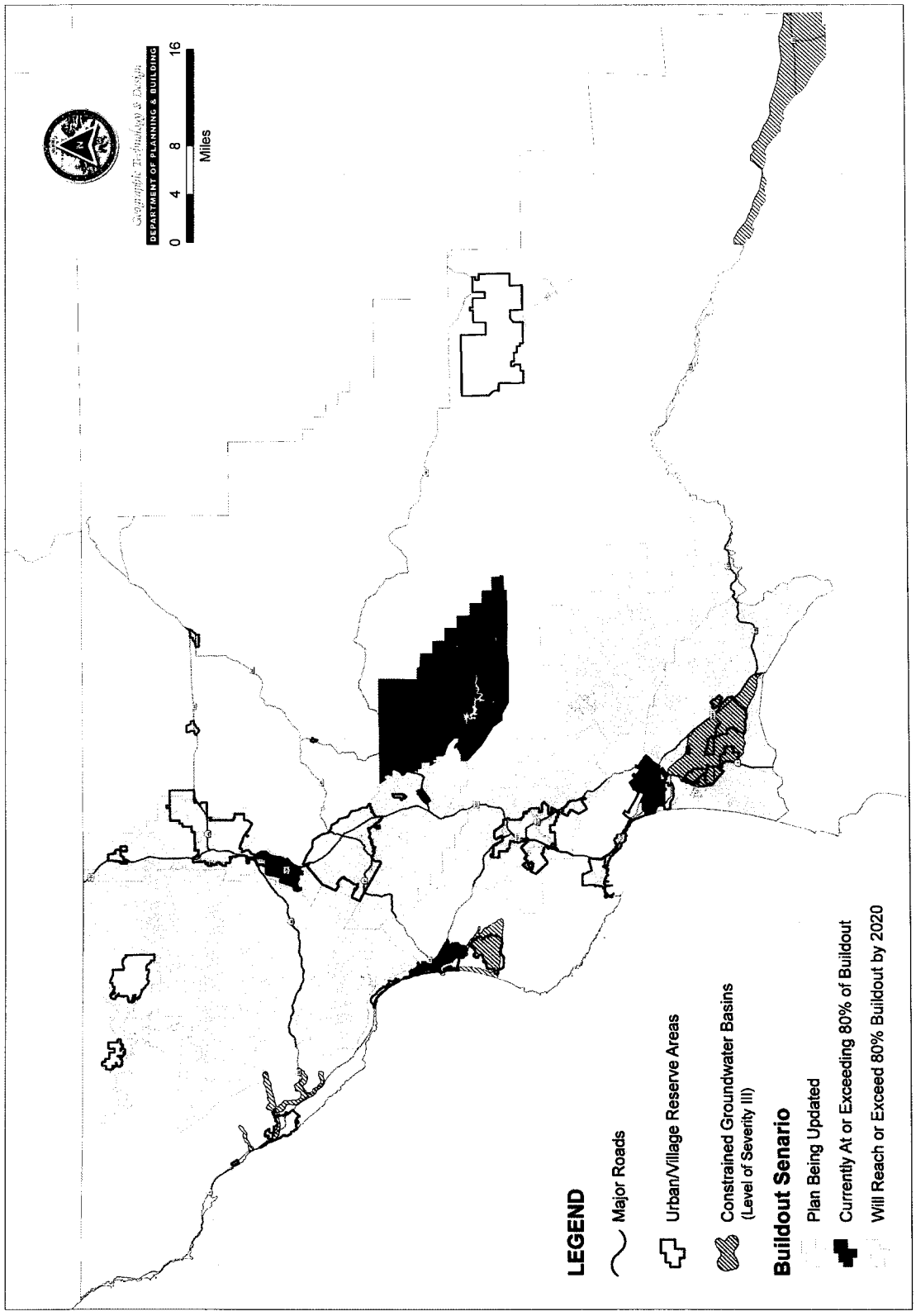
Costs associated with inappropriate rural development
Inappropriate rural development and sprawl result in costs with regard to resources, economics and quality of life. The following are examples of these costs:

- Depleted groundwater resources require expensive solutions.
- Lost and impacted agricultural land
- Impacted biological resources
- Impacted rural services such as sheriff and fire protection, and road maintenance
- Increased infrastructure costs
- Increased vehicle miles traveled and resulting increased greenhouse gas emissions
- Increased energy consumption
- Diminished rural character and separation between communities
- Potentially impacted agriculturally-oriented and other tourism
- Loss of quality of life factors that most residents desire

Table 2: Population Buildout

	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Communities reaching 80% or more of General Plan buildout	- Morro Bay - Santa Margarita -Templeton - Arroyo Grande - Grover Beach - Las Pilitas	- Rural South County - Rural SLO	- San Miguel - Avila Beach - SLO - Shandon - Los Osos - Adelaida - Huasna	- Atascadero - Paso Robles - Nipomo - South County - Salinas River	- Pismo Beach - San Luis Bay
Communities reaching 100%of General Plan buildout		- Santa Margarita	- Templeton - Shandon	- San Miguel - Rural South County - Adelaida	- El Pomar - Morro Bay - Los Osos - Huasna - Las Pilitas - Avila Beach - SLO - Rural SLO - Nipomo - Arroyo Grande

Figure 1: Growth Considerations: Buildout and Groundwater Supplies



Regional growth issues and the current Land Use Element
The Land Use Element of the County General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 1981, and since then, several of the 15 area plans, as well as some community plans, have been updated. Nevertheless, little has been accomplished to address growth issues through regional coordination and cooperation between cities, towns, rural areas, government agencies, and community service providers. For example, increasing traffic congestion on Highway 101 and air quality concerns are closely related to the relationship between the locations of jobs and housing. This imbalance throughout the county has resulted in significant increases in vehicle miles traveled. As the region continues to attract new residents, a regional approach is needed to address growth issues, as well as other regional needs. Such region-related needs include addressing shared constraints, especially water supply, major infrastructure deficiencies, agricultural and open space protection, habitat conservation, and the distribution of the region's "fair share" of affordable housing units as required by State regulations. The consequences of growth, as well as the potential solutions, cross jurisdictional boundaries, and comprehensive solutions might be found from a more regional perspective.

The county's many area plans (in the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the County General Plan), together with planning area standards in Land Use Ordinance, are updated individually and in isolation, often without enough consideration and analysis of how they fit into or impact regional growth, land use patterns, environment, and economies. In addition, over time, the area plans, other parts of the General Plan and the Land Use Ordinance have become loaded with policies, standards and programs. Many overlap, and some are duplicative. As a result, this current system with many separate areas plans is difficult for the public to use and is costly to maintain.

<u>What is the concept of a Countywide Rural Plan?</u>

A Countywide Rural Plan is the Land Use Element for the unincorporated rural areas and would focus on promoting policies that protect agriculture and important biological habitats, encourage growth in urban areas and take a more regional approach to growth, land use and circulation. It would implement a long-term countywide vision for development, rather than focusing on individual planning areas in isolation. It would also take into consideration the regional implications of individual land use decisions. A Countywide Rural Plan would be coordinated with and implement the policies of the Conservation Element (now being updated), the Housing element (soon to be updated) and the smart growth principles now being incorporated into the County General Plan. In addition, it would also build on the ongoing Community 2050 "Blueprint" Planning efforts being led by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments to seek regional cooperation in planning future growth.

The Countywide Rural Plan would be an important part of the County General Plan, together with other countywide and coastal zone-wide policies in the Land Use Element. It would identify the county's policies on the preferred pattern of development, where growth should be directed, what infrastructure improvements would be needed, and how it would be accommodated. It would be the basis for implementing standards and programs for directing growth in the unincorporated parts of the county.

Since the Countywide Rural Plan would focus on rural areas only, the community plans for urban and village areas would remain in place as currently adopted. They would not be revised at the same time as the Countywide Rural Plan other than necessary reformatting to fit into the new general plan organization of documents (see a following section titled: "How would the Countywide Rural Plan be organized? How would the General Plan be reorganized?")

What issues would the Countywide Rural Plan address?

The Countywide Rural Plan would address land use and growth-related issues strategically throughout the unincorporated area, taking into account resources and growth patterns within cities, unincorporated communities and rural areas. Of particular importance would be planning for appropriate urban expansion areas in collaboration with cities, towns, special districts and other agencies, and perhaps even new population centers such as new towns or redevelopment of existing rural settlements. At the same time, strategies would be developed and implemented to help reduce undesired rural growth, thereby avoiding the costs associated with such development as noted earlier. New strategies would also protect in the long-term important agricultural, open space and natural resources and rural character that contribute largely to the quality of life residents enjoy and expect. The plan could include the following key topics:

Regional growth
In order to take a regional and comprehensive approach to future countywide growth, the Countywide Rural Plan would determine how projected population growth would be distributed and accommodated throughout the county over the next 20 years, and perhaps beyond that period. This would require consideration of regional issues such as natural and environmental resource limitations for long-term sustainable growth, circulation system and other infrastructure capabilities, regional housing and economic needs, and quality of life. Collaboration with cities, special districts and other agencies would be an essential part of this analysis and policy development.

Potential growth areas around cities and towns
How and where urban expansion occurs will be a key factor in helping to curtail sprawl, avoid leapfrog development and plan for orderly growth while protecting rural character and resources. Regional issues would need to be considered, and collaboration with cities, special districts and other agencies would be essential. In developing the Countywide Rural Plan, different approaches to avoiding undesired growth will be considered. These could include such ideas as urban growth boundaries, transfer of development from rural to urban areas in connection with annexations and general plan amendments, and plans that complement city and county plans for greenbelts and other buffer areas around communities.

Urban/rural interface
This subject deals with how urban development occurs at the edges of urban areas and how to maintain a distinction between urban and rural areas. The distinction between urban and rural is an essential part of what defines the character of this county, maintaining the identity of our communities and creating a sense of place. This topic could include identifying critical "gateways" and rural separators between communities, together with policies to maintain urban edges.

Rural development policies
Rural development policies are essential in order to limit inappropriate rural development and to protect rural character and important agricultural, open space and natural resources. These policies would focus on areas beyond the urban/rural interface. The policies would emphasize limiting sprawl, directing growth to urban areas where adequate resources and infrastructure exist and protecting rural character by addressing land divisions, development and general plan amendments.

Major themes
The policies and recommendations in the Countywide Rural Plan should be guided by and organized around the following major themes or topics:

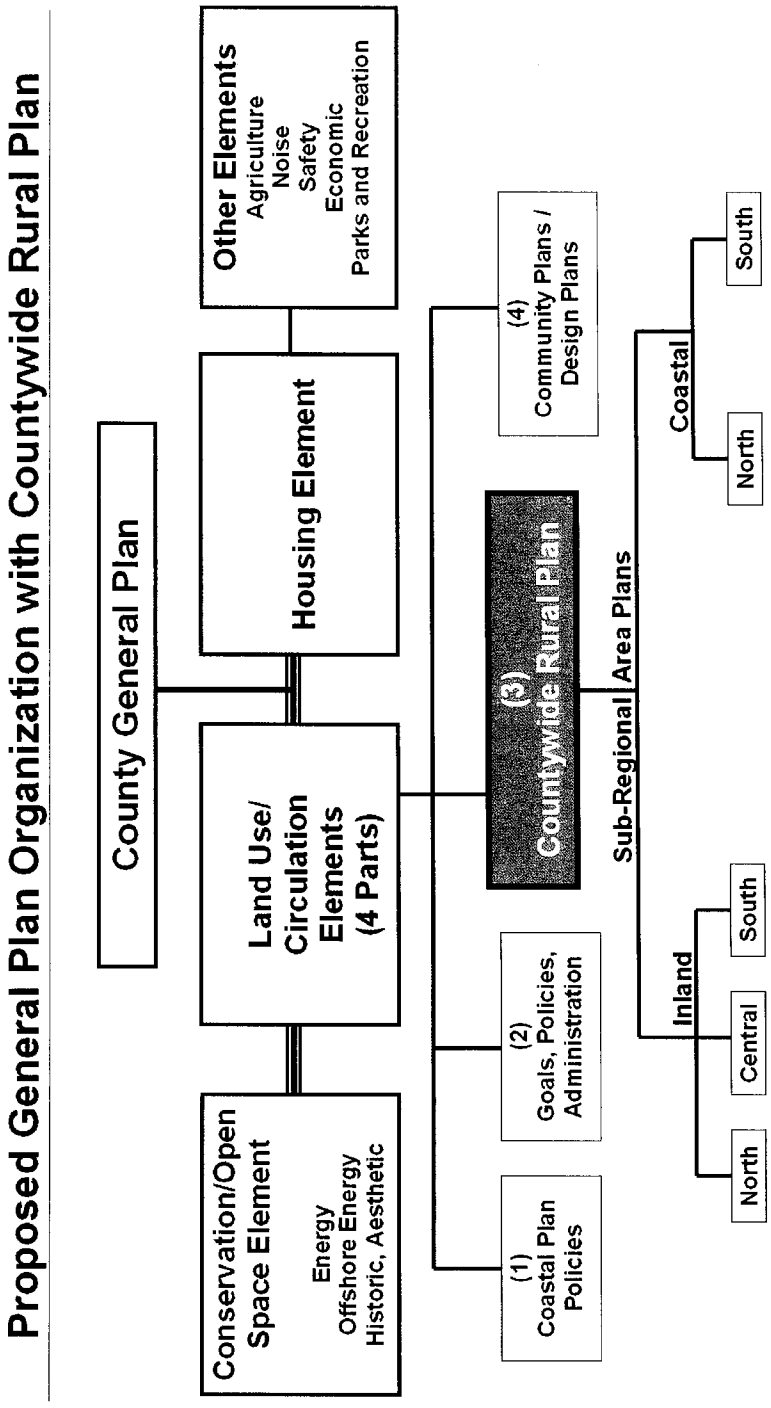
- Sustainable resources: constraints and opportunities
- Infrastructure, including transportation
- Jobs/housing balance
- Economic considerations
- Rural character
- Habitat conservation/biological resources
- Regional cooperation

How would the Countywide Rural Plan be organized? How would the General Plan be reorganized?

The new Countywide Rural Plan could be organized into three sub-regions for the inland portion of the county and two sub-regions for the coastal portion, but integrated into a single coherent plan (see Figure 2). For example, the 11 inland planning areas could be consolidated into north, central and south county regions within the inland area. In the coastal area, the four planning areas could be consolidated into north and south coastal regions. The regions could be further defined according to watershed boundaries, which are important considerations in land use planning. Establishing large sub-regions would also make it easier to coordinate land use with major biological systems; i.e. ecosystems.

As part of the consolidation of planning areas, the existing area plans would be reorganized and streamlined. For example, we could eliminate or relocate non-essential descriptive text in the existing area plans and eliminate duplication among goals, policies and programs. In addition; the plan would include new policies that address key regional topics such as resources, transportation, jobs/housing balance, and sustainable economy. The result would be a more user-friendly and concise document. The plan should be organized around goals, policies and programs that are formatted in a way that fits into a consistent format and numbering system for all general plan policies.

Figure 2
Proposed General Plan Organization with Countywide Rural Plan



The community plans for urban and village areas would not be revised as part of the Countywide Rural Plan effort, other than necessary reformatting. Following adoption of the Countywide Rural Plan, community plans would be updated to implement the relevant countywide plan policies.

How would the Countywide Rural Plan be implemented?

The Countywide Rural Plan would be implemented primarily through programs in the new, consolidated area or sub-regional plans, together with standards in the Land Use Ordinance. The Growth Management Ordinance, if ultimately revised along the lines that staff is now suggesting, could also play a key role in implementing Countywide Rural Plan policies.

In the inland areas of the county, development standards (planning area standards) are now included in the Land Use Ordinance and organized by planning area. Therefore, as part of the consolidation of planning areas into sub-regions, there would be a corresponding consolidation and reorganization of the inland rural planning area standards. This would also offer an opportunity to streamline and eliminate duplication among the various overlapping and similar planning area standards in the existing area plans. New standards could be considered in order to implement new regional policies of the Countywide Rural Plan.

In the coastal zone, the planning area standards are still contained in the four coastal area plans. In order to be consistent with the organization of the Countywide Rural Plan, those standards would need to be placed in the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance and organized by the new coastal sub-regions. Staff will evaluate the possibility of combining the Coastal Plan Policies--currently a separate document—into the Countywide Rural Plan and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The concept of a Countywide Rural Plan has been discussed with the Air Pollution Control District (APCD) the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) and city planning directors.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Staff would likely need the assistance of a consultant for a portion of plan preparation and for the Environmental Impact Report. The estimated cost for consultant assistance for the plan and preparation of an EIR would be in the range of $300,000; however, the project could be broken into two or more discrete phases that are separately budgeted over two or more fiscal years. Approximately 50% of the costs would be recovered through the new building permit fee structure, which reflects costs involved in maintenance of the general plan.

RESULTS

This proposal would result in a new part of the Land Use Element of the County General Plan: a consolidated plan for the rural areas of the county that focuses on a regional approach to land use and growth. It would implement policies in the Conservation

Element, Housing Element and further strategic growth principles in the general plan. This effort would result in a reorganized general plan, including a new Countywide Rural Plan divided into a few sub-regions, and separate community plans for the urban and village areas. This consolidated sub-regional plans would result in efficiencies when it comes to updating those plans in the future. The Countywide Rural Plan would be accompanied by consolidated, reorganized and streamlined planning area standards in the Land Use Ordinance and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance. Those ordinances could include revised and new standards. All of the new and reorganized documents should be concise, policy-oriented, and easy for the public to understand and use. If your Board is interested in pursuing this idea of a Countywide Rural Plan, work could begin as early as mid-2008 and take about 36 months to complete and adopt.

ATTACHMENT 1

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 1989 GROWTH MANAGEMENT REPORT: "GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR THE FUTURE OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY"

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Board of Supervisors should undertake the steps necessary for form a County Regional Growth Management Authority. Its task would be to coordinate a regional approach to planning between and among jurisdictions, and resolve conflicts between jurisdictions in the event of disputes over land use policies and their cross-jurisdictional impacts.

   As the first step, the Board should appoint and fund an Interim Advisory Committee to develop a charter for the Authority and begin the task of developing a consensus among jurisdictions in the County in designing and empowering that Authority. Membership on the Interim Advisory Committee should include representatives of the cities and reflect the diversity of community interest represented on the current Growth Management Advisory Committee.

2. The Resource Management System (RMS) of the County General Plan should be revised and strengthened to require that necessary, mandatory, remedial actions be taken at each phase in the process. These steps would include conservation measures, administrative actions on additional infrastructure construction, and reducing the rate of growth in the affected area depending on the level of severity attained.

3. The Board of Supervisors should adopt an interim ordinance that sets a maximum annual number of building permits for new residential units in the unincorporated area of the County sufficient to accommodate an annual household population increase of not more than 2.5% for fiscal year 1989-90. For following years, the 2.5% shall be considered a population cap and the annual growth rate shall be established in a public hearing conducted by the Board of Supervisors.

4. The Board should adopt an interim ordinance imposing a temporary moratorium on issuing building permits on lots in antiquated (substandard) subdivisions and on further approval of subdivision and parcel maps in rural area outside urban and village reserve lines pending a study and analysis of growth patterns in the County. The outcome of the study will be a settlement pattern strategy for determining where growth will occur and accompanying policies and incentives for implementing that strategy.

   The Board should adopt an Agriculture and Open Space Element of the County General Plan distinguishing between production agricultural lands, and other open space and rural lands. The Plan implementation would be integrated into the settlement pattern strategy described above.

5. The Board of Supervisors should establish mechanisms for addressing affordable housing needs and the jobs/housing imbalance including establishment of a countywide housing authority. These mechanisms should be coordinated with the activities of the proposed County Regional Growth Management Authority and appropriate county agencies designated to implement the growth management strategies.

6. Within two years, the Board of Supervisors should adopt an Infrastructure Element of the County General Plan for each community under the County's jurisdiction and identify appropriate funding mechanisms to implement this element.

7. The Board of Supervisors should appoint an economic development commission to assess how we can improve the quality and variety of jobs available to our residents.

The Board of Supervisors should adopt a policy of encouraging use of local labor force for future residential and commercial development projects in order to provide job opportunities to County residents that will keep salaries and generated tax dollars in San Luis Obispo County.

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