



County of San Luis Obispo  
 Department of Public Works  
 County Government Center, Room 207  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

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**TO OUR CUSTOMERS:** The County of San Luis Obispo is pleased to present this annual report describing the quality of your drinking water. We sincerely hope this report gives you the information you seek and have a right to know.

Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua de beber.  
 Tradúzcalo ó hable con alguien que lo entienda bien.

**YOUR WATER SUPPLY**



Your water comes from groundwater wells located in Santa Margarita. The water is cleaned through a natural filtration process as it trickles down through the ground. During this process, water may also pick up minerals or contaminants found in the soil, either natural or man-made. Groundwater is normally very clean and is simply disinfected with chlorine to help minimize viral and bacterial contamination.

**GENERAL DRINKING WATER INFORMATION**

All drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the USEPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline, 1(800) 426-4791.

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDs or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. The USEPA and Centers for Disease Control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1(800) 426-4791.

Additionally, the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water maintains a website with useful information on drinking water. The address is [www.epa.gov/safewater/](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/). Information can also be obtained by accessing the American Water Works Association's website at [www.awwa.org](http://www.awwa.org), the DHS website at [www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/default.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/default.htm), or by calling John Beaton, Water Quality Manager, at (805) 781-5111.

**SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER**

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.

**Contaminants that may be present in source water include:**

- *Microbial contaminants*, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife.
- *Inorganic contaminants*, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.
- *Pesticides and herbicides*, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses.
- *Organic chemical contaminants*, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems.
- *Radioactive contaminants* which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) prescribe regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. CDHS regulations also establish limits for contaminants in bottled water which must provide the same protection for public health.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If you have questions regarding this report, please contact John Beaton, Water Quality Manager, at (805) 781-5111 or Email: [jbeaton@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:jbeaton@co.slo.ca.us)

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!!**

Go to [www.slocountywater.org](http://www.slocountywater.org) and click on "Water Quality Lab" at the top of the page or go directly to [www.slocounty.ca.gov/PW/WaterResources/WQL.htm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/PW/WaterResources/WQL.htm)

**KEY TERMS and ABBREVIATIONS**

**AL (Action Level, Regulatory):** The concentration of a contaminant that, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirement which a water system must follow.

**CFU/mL:** Colony Forming Units per milliliter

**MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. Primary MCLs are set as close to the PHGs (or MCLGs) as is economically and technologically feasible.

**MCLG (Maximum Contaminant Level Goal):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs are set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

**Micromhos/cm (Micromhos per centimeter):** A measure of electrical conductance.

**MRDL (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level):** The level of a disinfectant added for water treatment that may not be exceeded at the consumer's tap.

**MRDLG (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal):** The level of a disinfectant added for water treatment below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs are set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**NA:** Not Applicable

**ND (Not Detected):** Contaminant is not detectable at testing limit.

**NTU:** Nephelometric Turbidity Unit

**PDWS (Primary Drinking Water Standards):** MCLs and MRDLs for contaminants that affect health along with their monitoring and reporting requirements, and water treatment requirements.

**PHG (Public Health Goal):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. PHGs are set by the California Environmental Protection Agency.

**ppm:** parts per million, or milligrams per liter (mg/L)

**ppb:** parts per billion, or micrograms per liter (µg/L)

**RAA (Running Annual Average):** Average data for last four quarters.

**SDWS (Secondary Drinking Water Standards):** MCLs for contaminants that affect taste, odor, or appearance of the drinking water. Contaminants with SDWSs do not affect health at the MCL levels.

**TON:** Threshold Odor Number

**TT (Treatment Technique):** A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.

**USEPA:** United States Environmental Protection Agency

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

The Santa Margarita CSA Advisory Committee meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm in the Community Hall. The public is welcome to attend. The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors meets every Tuesday (except the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in a month) in the board chambers located in the new County Government Center, 1055 Monterey Street, San Luis Obispo. The Board holds budget hearings during the month of June. Interested persons should check the Board's agendas for specific dates. Agendas for all Board of Supervisors meetings are posted in some County libraries, the County Government Center, and on the Board of Supervisors internet web site at [www.slocounty.ca.gov](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov).

**OPERATIONS**

All operators who work for the County are certified by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS). They are knowledgeable professionals dedicated to maintaining an excellent water system and providing you with the best quality water possible. Operators routinely inspect the wells, tanks, and distribution system in order to ensure safe and reliable water. In addition, the CDHS routinely inspects the facilities, operating procedures, and water quality monitoring records to verify compliance with state and federal regulatory requirements.

**WATER TESTING**

Water analyses are performed by the San Luis Obispo County Water Quality Laboratory (SLOCWQL) or contracted to another certified laboratory. The SLOCWQL is certified by the CDHS as an environmental testing laboratory for bacteriological and chemical analyses. Federal and state requirements dictate that all regulatory analyses be performed by certified labs following approved procedures.

**SOURCE WATER ASSESSMENTS**

The wells are routinely monitored for contaminants and the results are submitted to the California Department of Health Services. The findings are evaluated relative to the California Drinking Water Primary and Secondary Maximum Contaminant Standards. In 2005, previously completed sanitary surveys and source water assessments for the Santa Margarita system were updated by County staff. The studies were conducted to locate potential sources of contamination or contaminating activities in the watershed and assess their impact on the water system. The updated studies included a review of water system information, meetings with water system staff, and field reconnaissance. No significant changes were noted in the watershed survey and the source assessment concluded that the wells continue to be most vulnerable to the following activities for which no associated contaminant has been detected in the water supply: gasoline station. A copy of the complete assessment is available at:

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**ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCES and SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

Alternative water sources are being evaluated in order to maintain a reliable, adequate, and potable water supply for the future. In addition, County staff are aggressively pursuing government grants and loans to help fund storage and distribution improvements.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

The County of San Luis Obispo serves water to the community of Santa Margarita through 520 service connections. The County maintains two wells as active sources for the water system, Well #3 and Well #4. Well #4 produces approximately 400 gallons per minute and is the main producer for the system. Water production from Well #3 is limited (approximately 100 gallons per minute) and is not used on a regular basis. Well #3 supplements the water supply as needed. In 2006, Well #3 provided 28.9% of the 60 million gallons of water delivered to the community.

Well #3 is a deep well that when untreated, exceeds the Secondary Drinking Water Standard for iron. For this reason, the well receives filtration removal treatment. After filtration, the iron levels in the water comply with drinking water standards.

Well #4 is relatively shallow and considered to be "under the influence of surface water." This means it may be more vulnerable to microbial and other contaminants. In recognition of this, operators continuously monitor turbidity and chlorine disinfectant levels from the well to verify proper disinfection.

The water in Santa Margarita tends to be corrosive to household and building pipes. Corrosion of pipes can introduce lead and copper into the water delivered from your tap. The US Environmental Protection Agency has established primary drinking water regulations for lead and copper which requires monitoring "first-draw" water samples from residents' indoor taps. These samples are to be collected at high-risk homes, defined as homes with lead solder installed after 1982, homes with lead pipes, or homes with lead service lines. The water is collected by residents from a cold-water kitchen or bathroom tap. Prior to sampling, the water must be allowed to stand motionless in plumbing pipes for at least six hours. Residents are asked to fill out a simple form verifying that the sample was collected properly, as is described in the supplied sampling instructions. Some of you may have participated in this sampling event in the past. The County of San Luis Obispo would like to "Thank you" for your participation. Your continued cooperation ensures the health and safety of Santa Margarita's drinking water.

Initial sampling for the Lead and Copper Rule was conducted in 1993. The first-draw water samples collected from residents' homes showed copper levels exceeding the action level (AL) of 1300 ug/L in 10% of the homes sampled. Lead was not found to be detected in any of the samples. In order to establish and maintain compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule, the water is treated with a combination of caustic soda (for adjustment of the pH) and potassium ortho-phosphate (a corrosion inhibitor). Since this treatment began, Santa Margarita water has been in compliance. In order to demonstrate compliance, we are required to monitor for ortho-phosphate and pH in the distribution system on a weekly basis, as well as the less frequent lead and copper monitoring at consumer's homes. The optimal range of ortho-phosphate in the distribution system is between 1.5 and 2.2 ppm. The optimal range for pH is between 7.4 and 8.0. Operators routinely maintain the optimal ortho-phosphate and pH levels in the

**WHICH IS BETTER - TAP WATER OR BOTTLED WATER?**

Many people buy bottled water to drink because they believe it is better than tap water, however, often this is not actually the case. Let's look at a few of the issues in the tap vs. bottled water debate.

**Purity** Tap water is regulated by the USEPA and must meet very strict standards to protect your health. Bottled water is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, and does not have to meet the same strict standards as tap water. Several studies of bottled water have found contaminants including bacteria, arsenic, and toluene. Also, there is concern that chemicals from plastic bottles may leach into the water that they contain.

**Environmental impacts** The plastic manufacturing process uses petroleum and pollutes the air. Transporting bottled water from the bottling plant to stores also uses petroleum and contributes to air pollution. Unfortunately, very few plastic bottles are recycled; most of them (around 85%) end up in landfills. That translates to literally

tons of plastic in our environment. And when plastic is recycled, the recycling process also uses petroleum. From the standpoint of using then disposing of limited resources, and polluting the air, tap water production has far lower environmental impacts than bottled water.

**Cost** Tap water costs less than 1 cent per gallon, while bottled water can cost well over \$1 per gallon.

**Source** Bottled water labels often imply that the water comes from a spring, but in fact at least 25% of bottled water comes from a municipal tap. When the water does come directly from a spring or underground aquifer, bottling it for sale in another location often depletes the water supply for the community where the bottling plant is located.

So which do you think is better—  
tap water or bottled water?

**2006 Water Statistics**

• **Santa Margarita Water Production**

⇒ **60.125 million gallons**

• **Average Daily Demand**

⇒ **164,726 gallons**