



Agricultural Offset Clearance Exemption Application

This application is for an Agricultural Offset Clearance exemption for new or expanded irrigated commercial crop production in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin as required in County Code Title 22 Section 22.30.204. Please refer to the ordinance text for full eligibility information and requirements, which is available at www.slocounty.ca.gov/prgwb-ag or at the front counter of the Department of Planning & Building. A map of the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin and Area of Severe Decline is available at: www.slocounty.ca.gov/prgwb-ag.

Date of Application Submittal: _____

Site Address: _____

APN (s): _____ Size of Site (acres): _____

Owner/Applicant Name: _____

List any adjacent parcels that are under the same ownership: _____

Exemption Type:

- Existing Crop Production - Sites with existing irrigated annual or rotational crop production, where satisfactory evidence is shown that those crops have been planted and irrigated within the last five years.
Replanting - Replanting of a site with the same crop type, as identified in Tables 2 and 3 below, where satisfactory evidence is shown that those crops have been planted and irrigated within the last five years. Replanting must not exceed the acreage of the crop production being replaced.
Improved Water Efficiency - Expanded irrigated crop production on sites with crop types that involve implementation of new water efficiency technologies, where satisfactory evidence, as defined by resolution adopted by Board of Supervisors, is shown that crops have been planted and irrigated within the last five years, and shall not exceed the average water use of the existing crop production, as identified in Tables 2 and 3 below (see page 4).
One-Time 5 AFY - Sites that do not have any existing crop production and are not within the Area of Severe Decline* (50 feet or greater Spring Groundwater Elevation Change 1997-2013) may be eligible for a one-time only exemption. The one-time only exemption is limited to the establishment of crop production representing a new total of no more than 5.0 AF per year per site. If a one-time only exemption is granted, the resulting crop production cannot be used as a source of Agricultural Offset Clearance credits in any future application.

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Site Description:

Describe the current state of the site, the site's irrigation history (if any), and the reason for applying for an exemption.

Existing Crops & Water Demand On-Site

Date Planted	Crop Type	Acreage	Applied Water by Crop Type (AFY/acre)*	Water Demand (AFY)*
Total Existing Water Demand (AFY):				

Proposed Crops & Water Demand On-Site

Anticipated Planting Date	Crop Type	Acreage	Applied Water by Crop Type (AFY/acre)*	Water Demand (AFY)*
Total Proposed Water Demand (AFY):				

*** See water demand calculation method on next page. Attach additional pages if needed.**

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Water Demand Calculation

Water Demand (AFY) = Applied Water (AFY/acre) x Acreage

Applied water shall be determined based on the crop type as follows:

- **Crops shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below**

Fill in the applied water figures as specified in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

- **Crops not shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below**

Leave the applied water section blank. Irrigated crops that do not fall into one of the crop groups listed in Table 2 and Table 3 will be assigned an applied water amount by a joint committee of representatives from the Department of Planning and Building, Department of Public Works, and the Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures, in consultation with UC Cooperative Extension.

- **Supplementally Irrigated Dry Croplands**

The applied water for supplementally irrigated dry croplands is determined on a case-by-case basis based on the 5-year average water use for the 5 years preceding the application date. To qualify for the minimum applied water amount of 0.1 AFY/acre listed in table 3 below or a custom applied water amount higher than 0.1 AFY/acre, please attach the following information with your application:

- Substantiating and verifiable water usage data for the 5 years preceding the application date including but not limited to monthly utility bills for irrigation wells and pump test reports for each irrigation well.

This information will be reviewed and confirmed by a joint committee of representatives from the Department of Planning and Building, Department of Public Works, and the Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures, in consultation with UC Cooperative Extension.

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Table 2: Crop Group and Commodities Used for the Agricultural Demand Analysis

Crop Group	Primary Commodities
Alfalfa	Alfalfa
Nursery	Christmas trees, miscellaneous nursery plants, flowers
Pasture	Miscellaneous grasses, mixed pastures
Citrus	Avocados, grapefruits, lemons, oranges, olives, kiwis, pomegranates (non-deciduous)
Deciduous	Apples, apricots, berries, peaches, nectarines, plums, figs, pistachios, persimmons, pears, quinces
Strawberries	Strawberries
Vegetables	Artichokes, beans, miscellaneous vegetables, mushrooms, onions, peas, peppers, tomatoes
CBD Hemp	Field Grown CBD Hemp
Vineyard	Wine grapes, table grapes
Supplementally Irrigated Dry Cropland*	Barley, wheat, oat, grain/forage hay, safflower

Source: Table 3 of the Agricultural Water Offset Program, Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, October 2014.
*San Luis Obispo County General Plan Agriculture Element

Table 3: Existing Crop-Specific Applied Water by Crop Type

Crop Group	Applied Water (AF/Ac/Yr)
Alfalfa	4.5
Citrus	2.3
Deciduous	3.5
Strawberries	2.3 ⁽¹⁾
Nursery	2.5
Pasture	4.8
Vegetables	1.9
CBD Hemp	1.5 ⁽²⁾
Vineyard	1.25 ⁽¹⁾
Supplementally Irrigated Dry Cropland	0.1 ⁽³⁾

1. Information obtained from RCD Program, UCCE, UC Davis (Strawberries 2011 data)
2. Information obtained from UCCE, San Luis Obispo County Cooperative Extension, April 2019
3. Supplementally Irrigated Dry Cropland application requirements are outlined in the Water Duty Factor section of Land Use Ordinance Section 22.30.204.
Source: Table 9 of the Agricultural Water Offset Program, Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, October 2014.

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Include these attachments with your application:

- Current title report or lot book guarantee
- Landowner consent form
- Vicinity map showing all parcels under crop production and adjacent parcels under same ownership
- Site plan(s) showing locations and acreages of existing and proposed crops*
- Evidence that the existing crops* have been irrigated within the last five years (before application date), such as:
 - Aerial imagery showing planting and irrigation patterns
 - Crop sale receipts and harvest records
 - Enrollment in the Regional Water Board's Irrigated Lands Program
- Evidence that the existing crops* have been irrigated before August 27, 2013, the effective date of the Agricultural Offset Urgency Ordinance
- *For Water Efficiency Exemption Only* - Water usage data for three years preceding the installation of the water efficient technology and one year following installation. Evidence provided must indicate a water use reduction significant enough that the proposed acreage of the expanded irrigated crop production will not exceed the total average water use of the existing acreage of irrigated crop production, as identified in Tables 2 and 3.

** If you are applying for a one-time 5 AFY exemption, leave the existing crops section blank and do not attach an existing crops map. If you are fallowing your land or stopping irrigation, please write "Fallowing" in the proposed crop section of Page 1 and do not attach a proposed crop site plan.*

Fees:

- A fee will be due at time of application to cover County inspection costs. Fees will be charged at the rate listed in the most recent [County Fee Schedule](#). Checks may be made out to the County of San Luis Obispo.

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What to expect after your application is accepted as complete:

- Schedule a site inspection
- Submit any corrections based on the initial review and site inspection
- Receive a conditional offset clearance once corrections and site inspection are completed
- Record a property information disclosure form
- Schedule a final site inspection to verify plantings and well meter installation
- Receive a Final Offset Clearance
- The County may schedule annual site inspections until January 1, 2028

Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) applicability notice:

An Agricultural Offset Clearance is an entitlement to plant irrigated crops with a specified water demand before January 1st, 2028.

The Agricultural Offset Ordinance will expire on January 1st, 2028 and is intended as a temporary strategy until the Paso Robles Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is implemented. GSP implementation specifics and timing are uncertain at this time. Please be advised that proposed GSP actions include but are not limited to monitoring and reporting requirements, groundwater pumping fees, and mandatory pumping limitations. See GSP Chapter 9 Management Actions and Projects for more detail. Information about the GSP is available at: www.slocounty.ca.gov/sgma.

An Agricultural Offset Clearance shall not be construed as any right or entitlement to pump groundwater. The use of groundwater from the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin in connection with any planting approved per the Agricultural Offset Ordinance (County Land Use Ordinance Section 22.30.204) is subject to the Paso Robles Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) and any amendments thereto as well as to any regulations and requirements that may be adopted to implement the GSP.

**Submit application with attachments and any questions about the
Agricultural Offset Ordinance to waterprograms@co.slo.ca.us.**