

## WRAC update for 5/2/12 by John Snyder

**In Nipomo there is much confusion on the two independent settlement process and Court process.**

In the settlement process in the Santa Maria Groundwater basin three annual reports are sent to the court web site by the settling parties as part of the stipulation. The 2009 and 2010 reports for the Northern Cities and Nipomo "areas" have not been requested to be reviewed or approved by the court.

The like the earlier reports the 2010 report for the Santa Maria Valley "area" report has been filed to the court website and requested to be "accepted"

From the Transcript of the hearing:

THE COURT: all right. This essentially is a hearing on the annual report. I have read the various papers that were filed including the opposition. I have actually skim read them. I can't tell you that I've studied the formal report prepared in some length, but i have a sense of it since i have seen it before. My understanding -- and you're the one that's principally opposing -- all I'm doing is accepting the report. **I'm making no finding whether it's spelled right or the wells are deep enough or whatever, but merely accepting it because that was part of the settlement and judgment that it had to be filed every year; isn't that accurate?**

Landowner Attorney MR. ZIMMER: that's accurate, your honor. .... as the court articulated, the court has not reviewed this document, the annual report, in any detail. There's no evidentiary finding on that report. The court is simply accepting it for purposes of the settlement agreement that was entered into by those parties.

THE COURT: one notch above just filing it with the clerk's office.

Purveyor Attorney MS. WILLIS: I think that's right, your honor.

The text of the 2/24/12 court order:

"The recommendation of the TMA for acceptance of the Annual Report came before this Court on January 13, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. The Court, having considered the papers filed on behalf of the motion and having considered any oral argument on the matter at the time of the hearing, hereby accepts the Annual Report." Document Title: "Order Accepting Annual Report", <http://www.sccomplex.org/cases/noticelink.jsp?FormCaseId=VAE2661C98F&FormDocId=PBDBEBC82B66>

There is a new report: 2011 Santa Barbara County Groundwater Report, May 2012

See: [http://www.nonewwiptax.com/Pages/Water\\_Studies.html](http://www.nonewwiptax.com/Pages/Water_Studies.html)

### **Executive Summary, Status of Groundwater Basins:**

2. The Santa Maria Groundwater Basin within Santa Barbara County and also that area within San Luis Obispo County known as the Oso Flaco unit has been calculated by the SBCWA to be in overdraft of 2,368 Acre-Feet per Year based on a 2001 study. This overdraft pertains to safe yield and not perennial yield. Water levels have declined since agricultural development of the basin began but no regional economic or water quality problem has yet been documented. In the 2005 litigation Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District versus the City of Santa Maria et al. the court ruled that based on a preponderance of evidence the groundwater basin is not currently in a state of overdraft. No "safe yield" number for groundwater extraction has been decided upon through the adjudication and based on this "tentative" decision, it is the opinion of the SBCWA that no further Santa Barbara County study is warranted at this time. For more information on this basin please see page 74.

Basin	Size	Estimated basin SAFE YIELD		Estimated Net Demand on Groundwater (AFY)	Surplus (Overdraft) (AFY)	Available Water In Storage (AF)	Land Use Summary
		For Gross Pumpage (Perennial Yield) (AFY)	For Net Pumpage (Net Yield) (AFY)				
San Antonio	70,400 acres	20,000	15,000	24,540	(9,540)	800,000	One town; extensive agriculture; some petroleum; VAFB
Santa Maria	110,000 acres (80,000 within SBC)	125,000	80,000	100,000 (87,500 with City of Santa Maria reduction in pumpage due to SWP supply)	(2,368)	1,100,000	Two cities; extensive unincorporated urban area (SBC); extensive irrigated agriculture; petroleum

**Groundwater Terms ( [...], paragraph marks and emphasis added)**

here are several terms used in this report that warrant definition. **Safe yield** is defined as the maximum amount of water which can be withdrawn from a basin (or aquifer) on an average annual basis without inducing a long-term progressive drop in water level. The traditional concept of safe yield has been widely discredited and is no longer used. [ because of the groundwater case, San Fernando added the concept of “temporary surplus”? ]

It has now been replaced with **sustainable yield**. Sustainable yield depends on the amount of capture, and whether this amount can be accepted as a **reasonable compromise between a policy of little or no use, on one extreme, and the sequestration of all natural discharge, on the other extreme.** A reasonably conservative estimate of sustainable yield would take all or suitable fractions of deep percolation.

**Perennial yield** is defined as the amount of water that can be withdrawn from a basin (or aquifer) on an average annual basis without inducing economic or water quality consequences (Muir, 1964). Perennial yield is also no longer used in current hydrogeologic studies.

**Net yield** is the safe yield value with the return flows (see definition below) subtracted. The net yield value refers to consumptive use of water that can be removed (without accounting for return flows) on an average annual basis without causing severe adverse effects.

**Acceptable dewatered storage** is the maximum amount of storage that can be removed from a basin without adverse effects. [like the groundwater case, San Fernando added the concept of “temporary surplus”? ]

Safe yield, perennial yield and net yield are defined here as they are still utilized in analyses sections of this report where updates using the newer and more accepted terms sustainable yield and acceptable dewatered storage are not yet used.

**Return flows** consist of the volume of irrigation water from production wells in excess of evapotranspiration that is re-added to groundwater storage.

**Overdraft** is defined as the level by which long-term average annual demand exceeds the estimated safe yield of the basin and thus, in the long term, may result in significant negative impacts on environmental, social or economic conditions. A basin in which safe yield is greater than estimated average annual pumpage is defined as being in a state of **surplus**. The term overdraft does not apply to a single year or series of a few years, but to a long-term trend extending over a period of many years that are representative of long-term average rainfall conditions. Thus the estimated overdraft accounts for both periods of drought and heavy rainfall.

**Available storage** is the volume of water in a particular basin that can be withdrawn economically without substantial environmental effects. This storage value reflects the amount of water in the basin on a long-term basis (a point on a long-term trend line of water levels), not the current storage level in the basin.

**Usable storage** or **working storage** of a groundwater basin is defined as the volume of water to the bottom of developed wells.