



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Sarah Ko, Water Justice Office, Department of Water Resources

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Subject: Drought Resiliency Plan – County of San Luis Obispo

Introduction

This Memorandum serves as the compliance document for the County Drought Resilience Plan requirements of Senate Bill 552 (2021) for the County of San Luis Obispo. Updates to this document will happen on an as-needed basis and will be noted at the end of the update table.

Background

Senate Bill 552 (SB552) was passed by the California Legislature in September 2021, placing more responsibilities on both local and State governments for preparing and acting in the event of a water shortage in rural communities. The bill calls for proactive drought preparedness for the most vulnerable communities by improving their management during future droughts, ultimately preventing catastrophic impacts on drinking water supplies. For counties specifically, two requirements were presented, both are provided below followed by how the County of San Luis Obispo (County) has fulfilled them.

Chapter 3 of SB552 California Water Code (CWC) Section 10609.70 (emphasis added):

1. A county shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction and shall invite representatives from the state and other local governments, including groundwater sustainability agencies, and community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents, to participate in the task force.
 - 1.1. A county may establish an alternative process that facilitates drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. The alternative process shall provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.

2. A county shall develop a plan that includes potential drought and water shortage risk and proposed interim and long-term solutions for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county's jurisdiction. The plan may be a stand-alone document or may be included as an element in an existing county plan, such as a local hazard mitigation plan, emergency operations plan, climate action plan, or general plan. A county shall consult with its drought task force or alternative coordinating process as established by this section in developing its plan. A county shall consider, at a minimum, all of the following in its plan:
 - 2.1. Consolidations for existing water systems and domestic wells.
 - 2.2. Domestic well drinking water mitigation programs.
 - 2.3. Provision of emergency and interim drinking water solutions.
 - 2.4. An analysis of the steps necessary to implement the plan.
 - 2.5. An analysis of local, state, and federal funding sources available to implement the plan.

Standing County Drought Task Force:

The County opted for an alternative process by leveraging the existing structures of the County Staff Drought Task Force, Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC), and accompanying county websites.

The County Staff Drought Task Force was formed prior to SB552 in 2014 for County Departments to coordinate all water interests during droughts. County departments that partook include the Office of Emergency Services (County OES), Planning and Building, Public Works, San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SLOFCWCD), Environmental Health, Groundwater Sustainability, Agriculture/Weights and Measures, and County Counsel. A Working Group comprised of members from County OES, Public Works, SLOFCWCD, Environmental Health, and Groundwater Sustainability was formed to engage directly with the County's Drought Resilience Plan process. The County Drought Task Force (Working Group) meets at least annually during non-emergency conditions and reports out to the public via the WRAC as necessary.

The Water Resources Advisory Committee¹ (WRAC) was formed prior to SB552 in 1945 to advise the County Board of Supervisors concerning all policy decisions relating to the water resources of SLOFCWCD and recommend specific programs and methods for financing. Membership is available to each incorporated city, Supervisorial District, water-serving independent special district, California Water District, Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) not otherwise represented on this committee, Resource Conservation District (RCD), Community Services District (CSD), County Farm Bureau, Agriculture at-large, Environmental at-large, and Development at-large. The Committee meets nine times a year and is open to the public.

¹ <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/committees-programs/water-resources-advisory-committee-wrac>

Accompanying county websites include the County Environmental Health Well Program², SLOCountyWater.org, and ReadySLO.org. The County Environmental Health Well Program provides available resources specifically for domestic well owners, while SLOCountyWater.org and ReadySLO.org provide available resources, information, and engagement opportunities for the general public.

The County's approach to meeting the SB552 requirement for the Standing Drought Task Force is summarized in the table below. Each component has at least one corresponding County fulfillment and short description.

County Drought Task Force		
<i>SB552 Component</i>	<i>County Fulfillment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Task Force of participating state and local government representatives	County Drought Task Force (Working Group)	Staff from Multiple County Dept.
	Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC)	Public Engagement
County drought planning/preparedness for SSWS and Domestic Wells	County Environmental Health Well Program	Private well owner resources
	SLOCountyWater.org	Online available resources
Coordination/communication opportunities on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies	ReadySLO.org	Online available engagement opportunities
	Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC)	Monthly public meetings

County Drought Resilience Plan:

The County of San Luis Obispo opted for an alternative process by utilizing existing plans and websites, updated with supplementary data and analysis developed as needed to ensure full coverage of all Drought Resilience Plan (DRP) elements. Existing county plans and resources included the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP), Master Water Report (MWR), County Environmental Health Well Program, and EmergencySLO.org. Two supplementary plans were developed to accompany the county plans and websites: the Drought Risk Assessment (DRA) and System Consolidation Plan (SCP). Each are described in more detail below.

The San Luis Obispo County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) provides guidance on how to effectively identify vulnerability to, and reduce risk from, natural hazards, working in conjunction with other plans such as the County General Plan and program-specific

² <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/slo-health/public-health/environmental-health-services/all-environmental-health-services/well-program>

hazard mitigation plans. The MJHMP provides a history and background of the county to then build on its hazards, vulnerabilities, capabilities and strategies for mitigation in place and to be put in place, and the methods and schedule for monitoring, evaluating, updating, and ultimately implementing the plan. The County of San Luis Obispo, along with its municipalities and special districts, first developed and adopted the MJHMP in 2005. Since then, the MJHMP has been comprehensively updated and adopted four more times in the following years: 2011, 2013, 2019, and 2025. The latest update in 2025 focused on addressing recent State of California legislation requirements, most relevant being Senate Bill 552 (SB552). Elements of SB552 that were addressed in the MJHMP included two drought risk assessments: one as part of the base plan and another attached as an appendix, a list of County drought mitigation capabilities, a plan for reducing potential losses to drought and water shortage, and a list of available drought and water shortage-related funding sources.

The San Luis Obispo County Master Water Report (MWR) is a comprehensive report that compiles current and future water resource management activities by the various agencies and entities within the County, organized by Water Planning Area (WPA). The MWR explores the relationships between the many activities and analyzes current and future supplies and demands in the county. It supports identifying future water management strategies, methods to optimize existing strategies, and all County water resource planning efforts. The San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SLOFCWCD) and County of San Luis Obispo developed the original MWR in 1972, updating the report in 1986, 1998, and 2012. The SLOFCWCD is currently in the process of updating the MWR from a printed report into a data and information system that will be updated regularly to ensure all analyses remain applicable and relevant. With up-to-date analyses, data, and information, the MWR will effectively support timely decision making for addressing water supply and demand issues overseen by County Departments such as Public Works, Planning and Building, Groundwater Sustainability and more. The main element of SB552 addressed by the MWR will be its own drought risk assessment separate from the two previously discussed in the MJHMP section. This assessment will be maintained regularly after development and published every 5 years.

Two County websites were utilized as part of the County of San Luis Obispo Drought Resilience Plan: The County Environmental Health Well Program website ³and [EmergencySLO.org](https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/slo-health/public-health/environmental-health-services/all-environmental-health-services/well-program). The County Environmental Health Well Program website provides a compilation of water well data and information specific to well owners and well drillers including water well data mapping, private well owner resources, water well construction and destruction permitting, well drillers' resources, and monitoring well construction and destruction permitting. The website is managed by the County Environmental Health Department. Website information most relevant to SB552 is the private well-owner resources, which ranges from an overall well-owner checklist to a domestic well-owner's guide. These resources are intended to assist county domestic well

³ <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/slo-health/public-health/environmental-health-services/all-environmental-health-services/well-program>

owners with routine well maintenance and safety for safe and consistent water. Domestic wells are not regulated or monitored by outside agencies; therefore, it is ultimately the responsibility of the well owner themselves to ensure their well water is safe for use.

[EmergencySLO.org](https://www.emergency slo.org) provides a singular platform for all current emergency alerts and information in the county, with links to other relevant websites. The website is managed by County OES. In terms of SB552 elements, [EmergencySLO.org](https://www.emergency slo.org) has a county drought information section, which provides a multitude of drought-related information from local, state, and federal sources. Information provided includes drought assistance and grant programs, drought proclamations, dry well and hauled water information, and much more.

California Department of Water Resources (DWR) offered two SB552 planning assistance options for counties to utilize for completion of their SB552 efforts; a grant to cover a set amount of SB552 implementation costs or direct technical assistance for development and logistical support via the State consultant, Stantec. The County of San Luis Obispo utilized the latter option of direct technical assistance. Through the assistance provided, Stantec developed the following two supplementary plans, the Drought Risk Assessment (DRA) and the System Consolidation Plan (SCP) to accompany the existing County plans and websites:

- 1) The Drought Risk Assessment (DRA) was developed to document how the County of San Luis Obispo will address the water supply vulnerabilities of domestic wells and state small water systems consistent with SB552 county requirements. Overall, the DRA helps the County plan for and potentially alleviate the impacts of droughts and water shortages for domestic wells and state small water systems through the evaluation of their potential drought-associated risks and vulnerabilities. The assessment is included as an appendix to the MJHMP as part of the 2025 update.
- 2) The System Consolidation Plan (SCP) was developed to identify potential opportunities for consolidation of domestic wells and state small water systems based on findings from the Drought Risk Assessment and the three conceptual evaluation strategies of physical and managerial consolidation, and emergency interties. All work completed by the SCP was guided by relevant DWR and SWRCB documents. All consolidation actions presented in the SCP are presented as conceptual projects only, requiring additional technical, financial, and consultation actions to ultimately determine project feasibility. The plan is a standalone document referenced via County websites.

The County of San Luis Obispo further componentized the SB552 requirement for the Drought Resilience Plan as shown in the table on the next page. Each component has at least one corresponding County fulfillment and short description.

County Drought Resiliency Plan		
<i>SB552 Component</i>	<i>County Fulfillment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Vulnerability/risk assessment	MJHMP Appendix H	Stantec Drought Risk Assessment
	MJHMP Section 5.3.9	MJHMP Drought Risk Assessment
	Master Water Report	MWR Drought Risk Assessment
Consolidation opportunities	Stantec System Consolidation Plan (SCP)	Consolidation opportunities
Domestic well drinking water mitigation programs	EmergencySLO.org	County drought information
	County Environmental Health Well Program	Private well owner resources
	MJHMP Section 6.4.6	County drought capabilities
Emergency/interim drinking water solutions	EmergencySLO.org	Drought information countywide
Necessary implementation steps analysis for the Drought Resilience Plan	County Public Works Projects Webpage	County SB552 compliance
	MJHMP Section 7	Drought mitigation strategy
Available funding sources to implement the Drought Resilience Plan	MJHMP Section 8.1.3	Short and long term measures and funding sources

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo understands that pursuing an alternative process will require maintaining each individual resource to ensure ongoing compliance. With the MJHMP on a standard update cycle of ~5 years, the MWR tracking risk and vulnerability every 5 years, and our emergency resources being refreshed regularly, we are well-positioned to remain compliant with SB552.

The County developed a Drought Resiliency Plan webpage⁴ to host this Memorandum, requirements of the Senate bill, and the County's compliance tabularized and linked.

⁴ <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/current-public-works-projects/drought-resiliency-plan>