Basin Conditions | Gross Pumping

Est. Perennial Yield 97,700 AFY

Basin Conditions | Well Levels
Estrella & Shandon Sub Areas
Basin Conditions | Well Levels
San Juan & Creston Sub Areas
Basin Conditions | Water Levels
Press and Public Pressure

Crisis for Paso’s groundwater basin

Covering 790 square miles, the Paso Robles groundwater basin supplies water for 29 percent of the county’s population. 

How water levels have fallen

Of all the areas of the Paso Robles groundwater basin, the Estrella sub-area directly under and east of the city has seen the greatest declines in water levels. The groundwater level has fallen more than 90 feet in 30 years, accelerating over the past decade.

Wine and water

How the growth of the wine industry and poor resource management are sucking the North County dry.

Sunday, June 20, 2010 at 8:29 PM

Save us and our wells

Please take 30 seconds. Imagine your family without water — dry wells throughout your neighborhood. Picture rarely flushing toilets, wet-wipe camping 24/7, trucking in nondrinking water, showering at friends’ house and laundr...

Monday, August 26, 2013 at 12:34 AM

Supervisors must protect Paso Robles groundwater basin

Much as we value what wineries have contributed to San Luis Obispo County — jobs, tax revenue, tourist dollars, cachet — thirsty vineyards cannot be allowed to threaten North County’s main water supply.

Sunday, June 23, 2013 at 9:15 AM
Basin Conditions | The New Map
Difference in Spring Groundwater Elevations (1997-2013)
Prior & Current Efforts

- **Studies**
  - Master County Water Plan (1998)
  - Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Study (2002)
  - San Luis Obispo County Region Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (2007)
  - Water Resources Plan Integration and Capital Improvement Program (2007)
  - San Luis Obispo County Master Water Plan (2010, ongoing)
  - Peer Review of Paso Robles Groundwater Basin Studies

- **Model Update (Fall Deliverable)**
- **Blue Ribbon Committee – Broad Stakeholder Process**
- **Expansion of Well Monitoring Network**
- **Level of Severity 1 Designation (2011) – Prohibits Certain New Non Ag Uses with Net Increase in Water Demand**
- **Urgency Ordinance (8/27/2013) – Prohibits Certain New Ag Uses with Net Increase in Water Demand**
- **Different Efforts to Establish Governance Structure**
Vineyard Team Role

• The Vineyard Team Mission:
  • Educate & Guide Growers Towards Sustainable Practices
  • Promote the Public Trust Based on Science and Honesty
• Broad and Diverse Grower Stakeholders
• Nearly 20 Year Track Record of Research, Demonstration, Education
• Programs Based on Science, Voluntary, Information
• Credibility and Trust from Growers and Community
• Increase in Water BMP Related Programs since 2010
• Conclusion: BMP Reporting Did Not Go Far Enough – Needed Information on Applied Water
• Program needs to be Meaningful, Measurable, and Based on Science
• General Resistance to Report Water Use
Bold Departure from BMP Tracking
Applied Irrigation Target Program

• Develop Applied Irrigation Targets for Subregions that Vary by Weather, Rainfall, and Spacing
• Framework developed by Cal Poly, Irrigation Training and Research Center used by Fox Canyon Water Management Agency
• 3 subareas x 2 spacings >> 6 different targets that change by year based on degree days and rain
• Growers submit irrigation records to Vineyard Team – anonymity is protected
• Compare Actual Applied Water vs. Targets
• Provide feedback to growers how they compare to their peers in similar conditions
• Report information in aggregate to broader community
Significance of the Program

• Collecting pumping records represents a huge commitment by growers
• The ONLY information on actual ag pumping – help inform future planning and decisions
• Comparing actual with targets is critical
• What is the variance from actual vs targets?
• What are the REASONS for variance?
  • Do the targets need to be refined?
  • Do growers need technical assistance?
  • Are the targets reasonable, meaningful and achievable?
• Would achieving the targets help affect ag demand? Or do these targets represent the status quo?
  • Battany, 2013 – Vineyards applied on average 8” – 12
Growers Benefit

• First and foremost, our programs are designed to help growers
• Help growers identify and achieve the best water use efficiency for their operation
• Prepare growers for eventual mandated measuring and reporting
• Prepare growers for possible restrictions on water use
• Institute methods based on science and agronomic factors to inform the future conversation on eventual policies
• Stabilize the groundwater basin
Looking Forward

- Basin Governance Structure Establishment – 1 year (?)
- Updated Model Information – Fall
  - Revised Perennial Yield Estimates (?)
  - Other Departures from Prior Studies (?)
- Applied Irrigation Water Target Program
  - Current peer review
  - Pilot program for 2013 season
  - Commitments from large and small growers to participate
- Basin Stakeholder and Decision Maker Support
  - Supports 4 of 13 priorities of Blue Ribbon Committee recommendations
- Other Partnerships – Utilities, NGO’s, Government
- Identify Creative Incentives
- Protect Anonymity and Independence of Vineyard Team Program
Contact:

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