

# SEASIDE GROUNDWATER BASIN WATERMASTER

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December 18, 2015

Supervisor Simon Salinas, Chair  
Monterey County Board Of Supervisors  
Monterey County Water Resources Agency  
168 W. Alisal, 3rd Floor  
Salinas, Ca 93901

**Subject:** Request for Collaboration with the Seaside Basin Watermaster to Seek Mutually Acceptable Solutions to the Falling Groundwater Levels in Both the Laguna Seca Subbasin and the Corral de Tierra Subbasin of the Salinas Valley Basin (as Defined in Department of Water Resources Bulletin No. 118)

Honorable Chair Salinas:

The Seaside Basin Watermaster was created by the Adjudication Decision rendered by the Superior Court of the State of California in and for the County of Monterey in 2007 under Case No. M66343. The purpose of the Watermaster is to administer and enforce the provisions of the Adjudication Decision. Simply stated, the Watermaster is to manage the adjudicated Seaside Basin such that it is protected against incurring "Material Injury" defined in the Decision as including but not being limited to "...seawater intrusion, land subsidence, excessive pump lifts, and water quality degradation."

Groundwater modeling conducted for the Watermaster by its consultant, HydroMetrics WRI, and reported in the Technical Memorandum from HydroMetrics dated July 28, 2014, led to the conclusion that even if all pumping within the Laguna Seca Subarea (LSSA) of the adjudicated Seaside Basin were to be halted, groundwater elevations in the easternmost portion of the LSSA would continue to fall. This indicates that pumping from wells outside of the LSSA prevents the subarea from achieving stable groundwater elevations. This influence was evaluated by running multiple scenarios with varying pumping from wells outside the LSSA. It was found that well pumping to the east of the LSSA has a significant impact on groundwater levels in the eastern portion of the LSSA and prevents achieving stable groundwater elevations in that portion of the LSSA.

This modeling work concluded that there will need to be significant pumping reductions both inside and outside of the LSSA to halt groundwater level declines throughout the LSSA.

A study was prepared for Monterey County Resource Management Agency by Geosyntec Consultants in July 2007 titled "El Toro Groundwater Study." The El Toro Planning Area, which was the focus of this Study, is located within the Corral de Tierra Subbasin of the Salinas Valley Basin, as defined in DWR's Bulletin 118. In the Executive Summary from that report there are several statements that pertain to and/or tend to confirm the findings of the HydroMetrics modeling of the LSSA, and which are supportive of this work, specifically:

On page ES-1 the study states "...water supply for the El Toro Planning Area is derived entirely from groundwater and major portions of the El Toro Planning Area subareas are hydrogeologically contiguous as are the aquifer systems beneath the northwest portion of the El Toro Planning Area and the adjacent Laguna Seca portion of the Seaside Basin along Highway 68." On this same page of the study it states "Decline of groundwater levels in some El Toro Planning Area wells during the 1980s, and the findings of a 1991 technical report (Staal, Gardner & Dunne, 1991) resulted in the County imposing a B-

8 zoning overlay in November 1992 to portions of the El Toro Planning Area due to potential water supply limitations. The B-8 zoning limits development to single-family dwellings on existing lots of record since 1991." Also on this page it states "Both the 1991 and 1996 reports, however, cautioned that demand approaches supply in most of the planning subareas and that build-out demand would exceed some estimates of supply."

On page ES-4 the study states "...decline in groundwater levels has been documented in the Laguna Seca area (Yates et al., 2002), which borders the El Toro Planning Area to the west along Highway 68 and is hydrogeologically contiguous."

On page ES-5 the study states "Downward trends for the majority of long-term hydrographs indicate that the rate of groundwater pumping from the El Toro Primary Aquifer System exceeds the rate of groundwater replenishment. Compilation of trend analyses for long-term hydrographs clearly shows groundwater overdraft conditions in the northern portion of the El Toro Planning Area near Highway 68, where the majority of pumping occurs." Also on that page of the study it states "Water level data compiled and reviewed for this study indicates that the primary aquifer system in the El Toro Planning Area is in overdraft."

On page ES-6 the study provides a number of recommendations, one of which is to "Establish a formal collaborative groundwater management program for the Laguna Seca and El Toro Planning Areas because they are hydrogeologically contiguous."

This Study informed the County some years ago about the overdrafted condition of the El Toro Planning Area's groundwater supply aquifers, and of that aquifer's hydrogeologic connection to the Laguna Seca Subarea's groundwater supply aquifer. Imposing the B-8 overlay was a step taken by the County to reduce future groundwater demands, but apparently did not have any impact on demands that existed prior to the 1991 imposition of that overlay – consequently most of the development in that area has not been affected by the overlay.

Since the work done by the Watermaster and by the County both concluded that the adjudicated Laguna Seca Subarea and the Corral de Tierra Subbasin are hydrogeologically connected, and that both of these areas are experiencing declining groundwater levels which cannot be sustained without ultimately causing Material Injury, it is clearly desirable, and in fact imperative, for the County and the Watermaster to collaborate to seek and implement mutually acceptable solutions to the problem of falling groundwater levels in both of these areas.

The purpose of this letter is to ask the appropriate County department to immediately commence discussions with the staff of the Watermaster with the objective of developing such solutions. On policy matters please contact Mr. Dewey Evans, Executive Officer. On technical matters please contact Mr. Robert Jaques, Technical Program Manager.

We look forward to working with you and your staff toward implementing measures that will protect the groundwater basins within our respective jurisdictions.

Sincerely,



Paul Bruno  
Chairman of the Board  
Seaside Groundwater Basin Watermaster