

Building Success

For many living on the Nipomo Mesa, the underlying groundwater table is the only source of water available to their property. Clearly, existing users are more inclined to seek constraints on potential users if water well levels drop. It is the homes and businesses of existing users that are threatened with a declining water table more so than undeveloped land. But what about the property owner who wants to build a home or business on their undeveloped land? How can our community balance the interest of all members in an equitable manner?

With the continued challenges to our water supply on the Nipomo Mesa, it is easy to focus our frustration on two dogmatic villains, development and agriculture. It is indisputable that adding users and expanding irrigated acreage on farms adds to the water demand on the Nipomo Mesa groundwater table. But existing homes didn't always exist and vistas of strawberry fields weren't always part of the Nipomo Mesa landscape. With so much demand for water, who has rights to groundwater on the Mesa when everyone is claiming that they do?

Planning and land use are functions of San Luis Obispo County government. However, due to our current water challenges, constraints on new development in the Nipomo CSD service area are also impacted by a court judgement issued on January 25, 2008. On this date, the Court overseeing water use on the Nipomo Mesa required all new development to be accompanied with a source of water other than the property's underlying groundwater. Additional constraints on new development due to our current water issue came in May of 2015. From this date no new water services have been issued to property owners within Nipomo CSD's service area due to low groundwater levels.

For the past nine years, Nipomo CSD has issued 23 acre feet of water to new development in its service area. In comparison, the community's water demand for 2016 alone was over 1,800 acre feet. While there is development on the Nipomo Mesa, it has been very limited in the Nipomo CSD service boundaries.

The Nipomo CSD has been ordered by the court to fulfill its responsibility of bringing a minimum of 2,500 acre feet of water onto the Mesa by July 2025. Thanks to Supplemental Water from the City of Santa Maria and the aid of two other water providers on the Nipomo Mesa, Golden State Water Company and Woodlands Mutual Water Company, Nipomo CSD is on target to meet its obligation.

Success is within reach. Together, we are building a reliable water supply system that can withstand years of drought. Once completed residents of Nipomo will have secured a water supply that will provide for a healthy and prosperous community. True success means all community members prosper, even those who have a dream to build their new home. To reach this high-water mark, Nipomo CSD will need to complete the Nipomo Supplemental Water Project. Until then we will need the community to use water wisely and Mother Nature to do her part and provide us with a repeat of last winter's rain. Maybe then we can join the rest of the State in celebrating the end of a long drought.

Until next time...

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The mission of the Nipomo Community Services District is to provide its customers with reliable, quality, and cost-effective services now and in the future.