

ACTION for Healthy Communities

Natural Environment Issues

Natural Environment Issues.....	110
E1 Quality of Life.....	111
E2 Natural Environment Concerns	113
E3 Growth Patterns.....	115
E4 School Overcrowding.....	116
E5 Agricultural and Open Space	117
E6 Parks.....	118
E7 Funding for Outdoor Activities	119
E8 Public Transportation	120
E9 Air Quality	121
E10 Water Supply & Consumption	123
E11 Water Quality	124
E12 Energy Use.....	125

Natural Environment Issues

People greatly affect the natural environment – and are greatly affected by it! Key environment issues include not only the degree to which negative impacts are avoided (such as pollution and crowding), but also the degree to which positive impacts are created (such as parks and public transportation).

From 1999 to 2001, public perceptions regarding the best things in San Luis Obispo County have remained essentially the same. However, perceptions about the things that detract from the quality of life have shifted.

Temperate weather is still considered the county's greatest asset, as noted by nearly a quarter of respondents. Other popular responses from 1999 continued to be popular in 2001, including the small-town quality (mentioned by 17%), natural beauty (14%), clean air/environment (14%), friendliness of people (11%) and general quality of life (10%).

In terms of things that detract from the quality of life, “nothing” continued to be the most frequently mentioned response (17%), followed by too many people (13%) and too much crowding/growth (11%). Emerging concerns include the cost of housing (8%) and concern about healthcare options (3%), both of which were mentioned twice as frequently in 2001 as in 1999. Diversity concerns rose by half (to 6%). Declining concerns included crime (from 6% to 2%) roads (from 8% to 5%).

When asked about specific environmental issues, County residents expressed a fairly strong degree of concern across the board. Nearly half of respondents said they were “very concerned” with water quality (47%). This concern was followed by loss of wildlife habitat (39%), building in open space (39%) and traffic congestion (38%). While growth is a concern for many, county data indicates that growth patterns are favorable, with most new construction occurring in established urban areas (and that percentage rising).

A less favorable finding is that county residents and businesses are using more energy per user. Over the last five years, per-capita usage has increased 10 percent.

Public transportation is still an unknown for many county residents. More than a quarter of county residents did not respond to a question about the quality of public transport. Among those who did respond, three out of four rated public transportation “good” or better.

Another quality of life issue is recreation. Nearly two-thirds rate recreation facilities and opportunities “very good” or “excellent.” Self-reported usage of recreation facilities indicates that one resident in four is an avid user, visiting parks, trails or beaches more than 10 times during a three-month period (fall and winter months). Most residents are occasional users (1-10 visits), while one in five residents did not visit an outdoor recreation facility. More than 60 percent agree that the county should spend more on recreation.

E1 Quality of Life



Telephone Survey Results

What one thing contributes to your quality of life in San Luis Obispo County?

Response	1999		2001	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Climate	128	23.6	192	24.4
Small-town quality	102	18.8	131	16.7
Natural beauty/open space	103	19.0	60	14.3
Clean air/environment	28	5.2	112	14.2
Sense of community/friendly people	69	12.7	90	11.5
Area/county/quality of life	55	10.1	76	9.7
Peaceful/quiet	24	4.4	45	5.7
Low crime/safe/security	27	5.0	45	5.7
Activities/clubs/recreation	7	1.3	35	4.5
General locale	19	3.5	30	3.8
Minimal traffic	7	1.3	24	3.1
Colleges/good schools	6	1.1	16	2.0
Everything	18	3.3	15	1.9
Identifiable/pleasant downtown	2	0.4	13	1.7
Growth/environmental concern	1	0.2	11	1.4
Family/friends/home/long-time residents	16	3.0	10	1.3
Cultural climate	0	0.0	4	0.5
Employment opportunities	2	0.4	4	0.5
Local businesses/services	3	0.6	2	0.3
Don't know	3	0.6	3	0.4
Other	30	5.5	41	5.2

Multiple-response question with 542 respondents offering 650 responses in 1999, and 786 respondents offering 1,012 responses in 2001.

Source: 1999 & 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E1 Quality of Life, continued

Telephone Survey Results

What one thing do you think takes away from your quality of life in San Luis Obispo County?

Response	1999		2001	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Nothing	100	18.9	118	16.6
Population too large	18	3.4	92	12.9
Too much growth/poor growth planning	67	12.7	81	11.4
Cost of housing	19	3.6	57	8.0
Cost of living	30	5.7	50	7.0
Lack of commercial/industrial growth	29	5.5	47	6.6
Insular attitudes/Lack of diversity	22	4.2	45	6.3
Lack of cultural activities/recreation	25	4.7	34	4.8
Poor road infrastructure	43	8.1	33	4.6
Bad local government	18	3.4	33	4.6
Lack of employment opportunities	28	5.3	24	3.4
Lack of quality, affordable healthcare options	8	1.5	22	3.1
Climate (summertime heat/fog/wind/cold)	19	3.6	13	1.8
Crime/gangs/kidnapping	33	6.2	12	1.7
Too many malls/chain stores	5	0.9	12	1.7
Location/access to city	16	3.0	8	1.1
Don't Know	12	2.3	5	0.7
Other	84	15.9	139	19.5

Multiple-response question with 530 respondents offering 577 responses in 1999, and 711 respondents offering 825 responses in 2001.

Source: 1999 & 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E2 Natural Environment Concerns



Telephone Survey Results

How concerned are you about the following issues in your community? For each one, please answer "Very Concerned," "Somewhat Concerned," or "Not at all Concerned."

Building in open space

Response	Number	Percent
Very concerned	308	38.6
Somewhat concerned	303	38.0
Not at all concerned	187	23.4
Total	798	100

Loss of wildlife habitat

Response	Number	Percent
Very concerned	312	39.0
Somewhat concerned	309	38.6
Not at all concerned	180	22.5
Total	801	100

Water quality

Response	Number	Percent
Very concerned	375	46.9
Somewhat concerned	270	33.8
Not at all concerned	154	19.3
Total	799	100

Air pollution

Response	Number	Percent
Very concerned	253	31.4
Somewhat concerned	304	37.7
Not at all concerned	249	30.9
Total	806	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E2 Natural Environment Concerns, continued

Traffic congestion

Response	Number	Percent
Very concerned	307	38.0
Somewhat concerned	309	38.3
Not at all concerned	191	23.7
Total	807	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E3 Growth Patterns

Urban vs. Rural Development

	1993-1995	1994-1996	1995-1997	1996-1998	1997-1999
Rural Dwelling Units Completed as a Percentage of all Dwelling Units	21.3	19.9	20.1	17.3	17.4

Note: Percentage refers to the number of new dwelling units completed in the county's rural areas vs. those completed in the cities and unincorporated communities.

Source: San Luis Obispo Department of Planning & Building

Traffic Volume (21 monitored road segments)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Peak-hour Traffic Volume	13,342	12,959	14,611	14,687	16,433
Peak-hour Traffic Per Capita	0.156	0.150	0.167	0.165	0.182

Note: Measure of total peak hour traffic volume for 21 road segments in the county-maintained road network. Traffic on state highways and city streets is not included.

Source: San Luis Obispo Department of Planning & Building, 2001.

E4 School Overcrowding

Percentage of Students Attending Overcrowded Schools

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
San Luis Obispo County	76.9%	77.8%	74.9%	62.1%	63.7%	61.7%	64.3%

Enrollment vs. Capacity, by School

District	School	Capacity	Enrollment	Enrollment as % of Capacity	RLOS*
Cayucos Elementary	Cayucos Elementary	240	292	122%	III
Shandon Unified	Shandon Elementary	150	173	115%	III
	Shandon Jr/Sr H.S.	100	150	150%	III
Coast Unified	Cambria Elementary	191	356	186%	III
	Santa Lucia Middle	103	190	184%	III
	Coast Union H.S.	506	319	63%	OK
San Miguel Joint Union	Lillian Larson K-8	250	463	185%	III
Paso Robles	Paso Robles Elem (5)	2,860	2,806	98%	II
	Paso Robles Mdl (2)	1,170	1,414	121%	III
	Paso Robles H.S.	1,508	2,055	136%	III
Templeton Unified	Templeton Elem (2)	450	992	220%	III
	Templeton Middle	350	556	159%	III
	Templeton H.S.	425	673	158%	III
Atascadero Unified	Atascadero Elem (4)	1,708	2,328	136%	III
	Atascadero Jr. High	1,246	865	69%	OK
	Atascadero H.S.	1,929	1,752	90%	II
	Carrisa Plains K-8	53	46	87%	OK
	Creston Elementary	40	110	275%	III
	Santa Margarita Elem	358	403	113%	III
San Luis Coastal Unified	Los Osos Elem (3)	1,640	1,099	67%	OK
	Los Osos Middle	650	502	77%	OK
	Morro Bay H. S.	1,000	986	99%	II
	Morro Bay Elem (2)	1,100	547	50%	OK
	SLO Area Elem (7)	3,990	2,668	67%	OK
	Laguna Middle	850	836	98%	II
	San Luis H.S.	1,564	1,647	105%	III
Bellevue-Santa Fe	K-8 (Charter)	170	146	86%	OK
Lucia Mar Unified	Five Cities Elem (8)	3,545	4,214	119%	III
	Middle Schools (3)	1,810	1,997	110%	III
	Arroyo Grande H.S.	1,500	3,212	214%	III
	Nipomo Elem (2)	1,050	1,388	132%	III

*RLOS stands for "Recommended Level of Severity." Levels include:

Level I: When enrollment projections reach school capacity within seven years

Level II: When enrollment projections reach school capacity within five years

Level III: When enrollment equals or exceeds school capacity

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building, 2001..

E5 Agricultural and Open Space

Harvested, Pasture and Total Acreage

Acreage (thousands)	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	% Change from 1998-1999
Harvested Acreage	126.3	128.9	140.2	117.3	118.4	0.9
Pasture Acreage	1,232.8	1,232.4	1,232.4	1,208.0	1,200.0	-0.7
Total	1,359.1	1,361.3	1,372.6	1,325.3	1,318.3	-0.5

Source: UCSB Economic Forecast Project, 2001

Preliminary Countywide Open Space Inventory

Open Space Resources	Total Open Space Acres	Permanently Protected	Temporarily Protected	Unprotected
U.S. Forest Service	188,000		188,000	
U.S. Bureau of Land Management	241,493		241,493	
State Parks, Beaches & Reserves	14,549	14,549		
County & City Parks & Open Space	14,326	14,326		
County Agricultural Use Category	1,387,200		807,000	580,200
County Irrigated Agricultural Land	60,000		42,000	18,000
County Open Space Land Use Category	211,900			
Total Open Space Acres	2,057,468	28,875	1,236,493	580,200

Source: County Department of Planning & Building, 2001

Note: The above table is a preliminary inventory of open space resources. The County intends to develop a comprehensive listing of open space resources to monitor changes over time.

E6 Parks

Telephone Survey Results

In the past three months, how many times have you visited any outdoor recreation facility in SLO County such as a park, trail, or beach?

Response	Number	Percent
None	175	21.8
1-2	124	15.4
3-5	179	22.3
6-10	118	14.7
11-25	108	13.4
26-50	64	8.0
More than 50	36	4.5
Total	804	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

Telephone Survey Results

How would you rate SLO county in the following area:

Parks and Recreation Opportunities

Response	Number	Percent
Excellent	200	25.3
Very Good	320	40.6
Good	207	26.2
Fair	52	6.6
Poor	10	1.3
Total	789	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E7 Funding for Outdoor Activities



Telephone Survey Results

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

"The county should spend more money to: Buy and preserve open spaces"

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	239	30.1
Agree	213	26.8
Neutral	198	24.9
Disagree	98	12.3
Strongly Disagree	46	5.8
Total	794	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.



Telephone Survey Results

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

"The county should spend more money to: Construct public recreation facilities"

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	176	22.3
Agree	314	39.7
Neutral	207	26.2
Disagree	69	8.7
Strongly Disagree	24	3.0
Total	790	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E8 Public Transportation



Telephone Survey Results

How would you rate SLO county in the following area:

Public Transportation Services

Response	Number	Percent
Excellent	83	14.0
Very Good	178	30.1
Good	192	32.4
Fair	73	12.3
Poor	66	11.1
Total	592	100

Source: 2001 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey.

E9 Air Quality

Summary: Total days exceeding state air quality standards

Location	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Ozone	4	3	8	20	0	27	2
Particulate Matter (10)	39	2	10	16	18	12	10

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building, Annual Resource Summary Report 2000.

Number of days exceeding safe levels of ozone

Location	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Paso Robles	0	1	7	11	0	25	1
Atascadero	2	2	1	7	0	2	0
San Luis Obispo	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA
Morro Bay	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Grover Beach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nipomo- South Wilson	1	0	0	1	--	--	--
Nipomo Regional Park	--	--	--	--	0	0	0
Nipomo Mesa-Guadalupe Rd.	1	N/A	0	1	0	0	NA
Total	4	3	8	20	0	27	2

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building, Annual Resource Summary Report 2000.

Note: The above chart refers only to exceedance of parts per million State Ambient Air Quality Standards (SAAQS), and does not include exceedances of national standards. The Nipomo South Wilson Monitoring station closed in 1997, and reopened nearby at the Regional Park (Tefft and Pomeroy) site in 1998. In 1997, there were no ozone excess dances due to complex climatological effects resulting from El Nino.

Ozone: Exposure to unhealthy levels of ozone can result in chest pain, coughing, nausea, shortness of breath, headaches, congestion and throat irritation. Most at risk during high ozone levels are children, the elderly, pregnant women, and individuals with asthma. About 40% of the county's ozone is produced from vehicle exhaust, while other sources include industrial fuel combustion, pesticides, and waste burning.

E9 Air Quality, continued

Number of days exceeding safe levels of Particulate Matter

Location	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Paso Robles	2	0	3	0	1	1	1
Atascadero	5	1	3	0	1	0	0
San Luis	1	1	1	0	2	0	0
Obispo							
Morro Bay	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Nipomo- South Wilson	1	1	1	0	NA	--	--
Nipomo- Regional Park	--	--	--	--	--	0	0
Nipomo UCD1	10	6	4	6	5	4	4

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building, Annual Resource Summary Report 2000.

Note: The above chart refers only to exceedance of parts per million State Ambient Air Quality Standards (SAAQS), and does not include exceedances of national standards. The Nipomo South Wilson Monitoring station closed in 1997, and reopened nearby at the Regional Park (Tefft and Pomeroy) site in 1998.

Particulate Matter (PM 10) refers to the mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air that are less than 10 microns in size. Studies have linked high levels of particulate matter to aggravated asthma and acute respiratory symptoms, chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, and premature death. In San Luis Obispo County, the single largest source of PM10 is re-entrained dust from vehicles driving on unpaved roads. Other sources can be grinding operations, fuel combustion, agricultural burning and wood stoves.

E10 Water Supply & Consumption

Water Use per Service Connection (gallons per day)

Region	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Inland	626.5	705.4	713.4	696.2	652.7	752.0
Coastal	353.3	357.6	377.3	364.6	327.8	366.1

Note: includes County's major water suppliers - the incorporated cities, community service districts and major private water companies

Source: Water purveyors; San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building

Community Water Supply & Distribution, 2000

Community	Recommended Level of Severity	Reason
Avila Beach	None	
Cambria	II	Seasonal supply shortage
Cayucos	II	Pending determination of growth rate
Garden Farms	II	Inadequate pumping capacity during drought
Heritage Ranch	None	
Los Ranchos/Edna	None	
Nipomo	II	Possible basin overdraft per DWR groundwater study
Oceano	None	
San Miguel/S.L. Terrance	I	Basin overdraft (Paso Robles Basin)
San Simeon	III	CSD moratorium; supply uncertainty during drought
Santa Margarita	I	Supply uncertainty during drought
Shandon	I	Basin overdraft (Paso Robles Basin)
Los Osos	II	Potential for seawater intrusion
Templeton	II	Supply fully allocated; Basin overdraft (Paso Robles Basin)

Level of Severity I: When projected water demand over the next nine years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply

Level of Severity II: When projected water demand over the next seven years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply

Level of Severity III: When the existing water demand equals or exceeds the dependable supply

Source: County Department of Planning & Building, 2000 Annual Resource Summary Report

E 1 1 Water Quality

Number of Public Well Systems Exceeding State Standards

Type of Contaminant	1996-97	1997-98
Bacteriological	16	16
Nitrates	0	3
Selenium	4	0
Total Monthly Sample Exceedances	20	19

Note: The above exceedances do not total to 12 months, as some water systems did not pass monthly sampling on more than one occasion.

Total Number of Public Well Systems Exceeding State Standards

	1997		1998	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Public well systems sampled monthly	160	100	160	100
Wells exceeding standards for bacteria	12	7.5	13	8.1
Wells corrected for bacteriological contamination	8	66.6	7	53.8
Wells exceeding standards for Nitrate	0	0	3	1.8
Wells corrected for Nitrate contamination	0	0	3	100
Wells exceeding standards for Selenium	4	2.5	0	0
Wells corrected for Selenium contamination	4	100	0	0
Failure rate for all primacy water systems	--	1	--	0.9

Source: Environmental Health Division-Public Health Department, San Luis Obispo County, 1999.

Note: Public well systems are small systems serving fewer than 200 people, and that are monitored monthly. The county does not monitor private wells. Drinking water should not contain any bacteria, yet bacteriological contamination does not necessarily result in illness. Selenium contamination is more serious, and in too high of levels can result in neurological damage. Contamination is often due to industry runoff. The County worked with each well site and the necessary corrections were made. Nitrate contamination is also serious, in that it displaces oxygen in the blood. Nitrates are usually due to fertilizer and wastewater runoff. Fortunately, the County again worked with parties responsible at each well site to correct the contaminations..

Note: Statistics taken from 1999 Action Report. Updated information not available.

E12 Energy Use

Per Capita Electricity Deliveries, by Sector (in kilowatt hours)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	% Change '99 to '00
Residential	2,227	2,242	2,302	2,328	2,386	2,439	2,475	1.5
Commercial	1,879	1,903	1,955	2,014	2,007	2,119	2,194	3.5
Industrial	431	412	374	416	384	419	443	5.7
Agricultural	346	343	364	398	337	399	381	-4.5

Source: California Energy Commission