



# Natural Environment Issues

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# Natural Environment Issues

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Environmental issues are important to San Luis Obispo County residents. Many people say the natural environment, including the weather, is an important reason for living in the County. In this section, we provide survey data on respondents' perceptions of environmental quality and environmental issues. We also provide objective data on topics such as air and water quality. Comparing the survey responses with the data provides another example of the difficulties inherent in interpreting survey responses.

As was the case last year, San Luis Obispo County's respondents' perceptions of air quality remain essentially unchanged. It is something of a paradox that over 65 percent of respondents express concern about the County's air quality, when the data show the County's air quality is impressively good. Indeed, the County has not had one day where the ozone level exceeded California's ozone standard in the two most recent years for which data are available.

Although the level of concern about most environmental issues has not changed since 2001, respondents in the current survey are less concerned about traffic congestion than were those of 2001. This is surprising given the increasing numbers of vehicles on the roadways.

Survey respondents also reported increased use of parks, and they reported increased satisfaction with the parks. When asked about funding for acquiring open spaces and construction of recreational facilities, a majority of respondents agreed the County should spend more money on both. However, we did not ask respondents if their taxes should increase to fund this spending. We also note the strength of the desire for additional spending appears to have declined since 2001.

Finally, we note that a strong majority of respondents reported that the County's public transportation system was good, very good, or excellent.

# Natural Environment Concerns

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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

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	798	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very concerned	38.6	40.2
Somewhat concened	38.0	35.4
Not at all concerned	23.4	22.0
Don't Know	na	2.3
Total	100	100

## Loss of Wildlife Habitat

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	798	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very concerned	39.0	42.3
Somewhat concened	38.6	34.3
Not at all concerned	22.5	22.6
Don't Know	na	0.8
Total	100	100

## Water Quality

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	799	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very concerned	46.9	44.1
Somewhat concened	33.8	34.3
Not at all concerned	19.3	21.3
Don't Know	na	0.4
Total	100	100.0

Source: 2001 and 2003 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Surveys.

## E1

# Natural Environment Concerns, continued

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## Air pollution

	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	806	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very concerned	31.4	31.4
Somewhat concened	37.7	35.4
Not at all concerned	30.9	33.1
Total	100	100.0

## Traffic congestion

	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	807	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very concerned	38.0	32.4
Somewhat concened	38.3	39.8
Not at all concerned	23.7	27.4
Don't Know	na	0.4
Total	100	100.0

## Urban vs. Rural Development\*

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Urban Units	1,319	1,518	1,995	1,726	1,454	1,346
Rural Units	237	334	387	373	438	518
Total Units	1,556	1,852	1,582	2,099	1,892	1,864
% Urban	84.77	81.97	75.54	82.23	76.85	72.21
% Rural	15.23	18.03	24.46	17.77	23.15	27.79

*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.*

## Traffic Volume (22 Monitored Segments)\*

	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Peak Hour Traffic Volume	13,534	15,194	15,278	17,033	14,527	15,603
Households	86,623	87,574	88,807	90,213	93,902	95,608
Peak Hour Traffic Volume per Household	0.156	0.173	0.172	0.189	0.155	0.163

*Note: Measure of total peak hour traffic volume for 22 road segments in the county-maintained road network.*

*Source: San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building, 2003.*

*\* There are differences between the data collected for this section in the 2001 report and the 2003 report.*

# E3

# School Overcrowding

## Percentage of Students in Overcrowded Schools

San Luis Obispo County	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
	76.9%	77.8%	74.9%	62.1%	63.7%	61.7%	64.3%	41.3%

## Enrollment vs. Capacity 2002-2003, by School

District	School	Capacity	Enrollment	Enrollment as %	
				of capacity	RLOS
Cayucos Elementary	Cayucos Elementary	240	234	103%	III
	Shandon Unified	Shandon Elementary	145	205	141%
Coast Unified	Shandon Jr/Sr H.S.	187	139	74%	OK
	Cambia Elementary	191	358	187%	III
	Santa Lucia Middle	103	193	187%	III
San Miguel Joint Union	Coast Union H.S.	506	347	69%	OK
	Lillian Larsen K-8	290	434	150%	III
Paso Robles	Paso Robles Elementary(6)	3453	2782	81%	II
	Paso Robles Middle(2)	1170	1614	138%	III
	Paso Robles H.S.	1508	2006	133%	III
Templeton Unified	Templeton Elementary(2)	955	895	94%	II
	Templeton Middle	545	594	109%	III
	Templeton H.S.	720	761	106%	III
Atascadero Unified	Atascadero Elementary(4)	1708	2219	130%	III
	Atascadero Jr. High	1246	890	71%	OK
	Atascadero H.S.	1824	1805	99%	II
	Carrisa Plains K-8	53	44	83%	OK
	Creston Elementary	40	136	340%	III
San Luis Coastal Unified	Santa Margarita Elementary	358	449	125%	III
	Los Osos Elementary(2)	1300	879	68%	OK
	Los Osos Middle	725	610	84%	OK
	Morro Bay H.S.	1000	954	95%	II
	Morro Bay Elementary(1)	650	458	70%	OK
	SLO Area Elementary(6)	3570	2476	69%	OK
	Laguna Middle	850	837	98%	II
San Luis H.S.	1564	1519	97%	II	
Bellevue- Santa Fe	K-8 (Charter)	170	159	96%	II
Lucia Mar Unified	Five Cities Elementary(8)	3541	4007	113%	III
	Five Cities Middle(2)	1150	1237	108%	III
	Arroyo Grande H.S.	1500	2576	172%	III
	Nipomo Elementary(2)	1050	1361	130%	III
	Nipomo Middle	660	787	119%	III
Nipomo H.S.	655	655	100%	III	

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building, 2003.

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

Level I: When enrollment projections reach school capacity within 7 years; Level II: When enrollment projections reach school capacity within 5 years; Level III: When enrollment equals or exceeds school capacity; OK: when a school is not at its capacity, nor do enrollment projections reach school capacity within 7 years.

## Harvested, Pasture, and Total Acreage

Acreage (in thousands)	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	00-01 %
						Change
Harvested Acreage	140.2	117.3	118.4	109.7	112.4	2.5
Pasture Acreage	1,232.4	1,208.0	1,199.9	1,066.5	1,067.7	0.1
Total	1,372.6	1,325.3	1,318.3	1,176.2	1,180.1	0.3

## Preliminary Countywide Open Space Inventory, 2003\*

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, and Reserves	14,549	14,549		
County and City Parks and Open Spaces	14,362	14,362		
County Agricultural Use Category	1,387,200		813,582	573,620
Prime Agricultural Land			85,240	
Non-prime Agricultural Land			728,340	
County Open Space Land Use Category	211,900			
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2003 Total Open Space Acres	2,057,468	28,875	1,243,073	573,620
Percentage	100.0%	1.4%	60.4%	27.9%
2001 Total Open Space Acres	2,057,468	28,875	1,236,493	580,200
Percentage	100.0%	1.4%	60.1%	28.2%

Source: UCSB Economic Forecasting Project, San Luis Obispo County Economic Outlook 2003.

\*Note: "Prime" and "Non-prime" subcategories are new entries for 2003. All other entries have not been updated and therefore reflect 2001 data.

In the past 3 months, how many times have you visited any outdoor recreation facility in SLO County such as a park, trail, or beach?

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	804	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	21.8	12.5
1 to 2	15.4	15.5
3 to 5	22.3	20.3
6 to 10	14.7	15.9
11 to 25	13.4	16.5
26 to 50	8.0	7.7
More than 50	4.5	11.3
Don't Know	na	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0

How would you rate SLO county in the following area:

#### Parks and Recreation Opportunities

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	789	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	25.3	29.9
Very Good	40.6	40.8
Good	26.2	21.5
Fair	6.6	3.8
Poor	1.3	1.7
Don't Know	na	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0



Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

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

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	794	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly agree	30.1	21.5
Agree	26.8	35.4
Neutral	24.9	25.3
Disagree	12.3	10.5
Strongly disagree	5.8	4.8
Don't Know	na	2.5
Total	100	100

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

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

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	790	522
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly agree	22.3	15.3
Agree	39.7	44.8
Neutral	26.2	21.3
Disagree	8.7	13.2
Strongly disagree	3.0	2.3
Don't Know	na	3.1
Total	100	100

Source: 2001 and 2003 ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Surveys.

How would you rate SLO county in the following area:

Public Transportation Services

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>
Number of Respondents	592	410
<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	14.0	10.8
Very Good	30.1	26.2
Good	32.4	35.5
Fair	12.3	19.2
Poor	11.1	8.3
Total	100	100

## Summary: Total Days Exceeding State Air Quality Standards

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Ozone	5	12	0	25	2	0	0	0
Particulate Matter (PM10)	17	12	17	16	8	17	13	21

## Number of Days Exceeding Safe Levels of Ozone

Location	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Paso Robles	5	11	0	25	1	0	0	0
Atascadero	1	7	0	2	0	0	0	0
San Luis Obispo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Morro Bay	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Grover Beach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nipomo- South Wilson/ Regional Park*	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nipomo Mesa- Guadalupe Rd	0	1	0	0	na	na	na	na
Total	5	12	0	25	2	0	0	0

## Number of Days Exceeding Safe Levels of Particle Matter

Location	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Paso Robles	3	0	1	1	1	2	2	0
Atascadero	3	0	1	0	0	2	2	0
San Luis Obispo	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Morro Bay	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Nipomo- South Wilson/ Regional Park*	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
Nipomoa Mesa (Ralcoa Rd.)	14	12	16	13	5	15	na	20
Nipomo Mesa (#2)	4	6	5	4	4	7	8	5
Total	17	12	17	16	8	17	13	21

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building, 2003.

Note: The table shows the number of days when monitoring stations found air quality exceeded the State Ambient Air Quality Standards(SAAQS), not federal standards. Ozone monitoring takes place every day, while particulate matter is tested every sixth day. Countywide totals are the number of days a standard was exceeded at any monitoring station. Because a standard can be exceeded at more than one station on a given day, the countywide total can be less than the sum of the individual monitoring stations. The Nipomo South Wilson Monitoring station closed in 1997 and reopened nearby at the Regional Park (Tefft and Pomeroy) site in 1998.

Particulate Matter (PM10) 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 PM 10 is dust from vehicles driving on unpaved roads. Other sources can be grinding operations, fuel combustion, agricultural burning, and wood stoves.

## Water Use per Service Connection (gallons per day)

Region	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Inland	696.2	652.7	752.0	778.0	714.0	661.0
Coastal	364.6	327.8	366.1	440.0	352.0	335.0

## Community Water Supply and Distribution, 2002

Community	Recommended Level of Severity	Reason
Avila Beach	None	
Cambria	III	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	None	
Oceano	None	
San Miguel/S.L. Terrance	None	
San Simeon	III	CSD moratorium; supply uncertainty during drought
Santa Margarita	II	Supply uncertainty; backup deficiency
Shandon	None	
Los Osos	None	
Templeton	II	Supply fully allocated

Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building, Annual Resource Summary Report, 2002.

Level of Severity I: When projected water demand over the next 9 years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply

Level of Severity II: When projected water demand over the next 7 years equals or exceeds the estimated dependable supply

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

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

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Residential	2,227	2,242	2,302	2,328	2,386	2,439	2,475
Commercial	1,879	1,903	1,955	2,014	2,007	2,119	2,194
Industrial	431	412	374	416	384	419	443
Agricultural	346	343	364	398	337	399	381