

## **C4H2O's Objective is Water Security, Not Population Growth**

Except to support the restrictions contained in the 2008 Water Master Plan of *no more than* 4,650 residential water connections, Cambrians for Water takes no position on growth. However, because the topics of water security and growth have been so tightly linked by many in town, a discussion of growth is appropriate.

Cambrians for Water strongly supports a regular operating permit for the Sustainable Water Facility that provides the CCSD flexibility to operate the SWF as necessary to provide Cambria a secure and adequate water supply. Unfortunately, Cambria's water security has been held hostage by fear of rampant growth for decades.

Some individuals in our community oppose the SWF because, they argue, allowing the CCSD flexibility to operate the facility to provide water security will necessarily lead to rapid and excessive growth. Arguing that the SWF is directly linked to population growth is inaccurate and the argument inevitably prevents Cambria from ever solving its decades-long chronic water shortage problem either by sensibly using the SWF or by any other means to supplement our limited natural water supplies.

As discussed below, providing for an adequate and secure water supply will not necessarily lead to excessive growth and there are a number of controls already in place to prevent it.

### **Water Security will not Necessarily Lead to Growth**

In and of itself, a fully permitted SWF will not necessarily lead to growth. Of course, adequate supplies of water, among other necessary infrastructure (such as roads, fire protection, wastewater treatment, etc.) must be present to allow a town to grow. However, the mere presence of adequate water and the other necessary infrastructure does not assure, or even promote, growth. Beyond whatever economic and natural barriers that may exist to discourage growth, there is a broad and tight regulatory network in place to moderate growth in Cambria.

San Luis Obispo County, not the CCSD, has the land use authority to regulate both the amount and maximum rate by which the County and all unincorporated communities, like Cambria, will grow. Further, the County has not been reluctant to use its land use tools to maintain the open, rural, agricultural, and naturally beautiful environment in which we live. For example, the County Growth Management Ordinance limits significantly the issuance of building permits in unincorporated areas of the County.

### **Master Planning by the County and CCSD Allows for Limited Growth, at Most**

Beyond the County's restrictive growth Management Ordinance, growth in Cambria is also subject to San Luis Obispo County's Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance and the North Coast

Area Plan, both of which place restrictions on growth. The North Coast Area Plan sets a growth limit of 2% per year. However, recent indications suggest the County is likely to reduce that limit to 1% if they permit growth at all.

In addition, the CCSD's Water Master Plan (WMP), adopted in 2008, conforms to the County's land use policies. The WMP sets a target maximum number of 4,650 residential water connections or approximately 20% more than today's total. If fully realized, this would be enough to accommodate current residents, the properties on the Water Wait List and a reasonable but small number of multi-family units for, among other purposes, affordable housing. The 4,650-target maximum was based on estimates of the number of dwellings and businesses that can be accommodated within the limits of the CCSD's water licenses. Significantly, in selecting the 4,650-target, the CCSD Board chose the *lowest* of the four alternatives presented to it, thus demonstrating the District's cautious and conservative approach to growth.

The estimates and targets discussed above are not static; they are updated every five years in the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) in which the community has the opportunity to provide substantial input. The 2015 UWMP is due to be updated as of 2020. The plan considers population and population trends, trends in average consumption, the economic environment resource availability, and many other factors in determining the District's ability to serve its customers.

### **Further limits on growth**

Any potential growth in Cambria is further limited by the County's zoning policies and the Urban Reserve Limits (URL) adopted by the CCSD. The CCSD is barred from providing potable water outside the URL, so the SWF cannot support potential growth outside the boundary. Within the boundary, the zoning ordinances determine the types of residential construction permitted. Additionally, potential new construction generally will take place on small lots owned by individuals. Cambria is not susceptible to large-scale development even if it could be accomplished within the limits set by the County.

### **Conclusion**

Granting a regular operating permit for the Sustainable Water Facility that gives the CCSD flexibility to use the SWF to provide Cambria with a secure and adequate water supply will not lead to rapid and excessive growth. There are just too many controls at the County and District levels for that to happen.