

Frequently Asked Questions

January 2024

1. What is Central Coast Blue?

Central Coast Blue is a regional water reuse project that will create a new, local, drought-resilient water supply and protect the local groundwater basin from seawater intrusion.

The program includes construction of an Advanced Water Purification Facility (AWPF), where water from Pismo Beach's Wastewater Treatment Plant is purified using state-of-the-art technologies before being injected into the groundwater basin.

This collaborative effort is a partnership between the cities of Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, and Pismo Beach that will benefit Southern San Luis Obispo County for generations.

2. Who is participating in Central Coast Blue?

Central Coast Blue is a collaboration between the cities of Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach. In 2022, the city councils approved a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement to form the Central Coast Blue Regional Recycled Water Authority (CCBRRWA) to manage and operate the program. The CCBRRWA is governed by a three-member Board of Directors, consisting of one representative from each city (currently Mayors Karen Bright of Grover Beach, Caren Ray-Russom of Arroyo Grande and Ed Waage of Pismo Beach).

3. Why is Central Coast Blue needed?

Central Coast Blue will protect our groundwater basin from seawater intrusion and provide a drought-resilient water supply for the region.

Southern San Luis Obispo County relies on three water sources to meet its diverse needs, these include local groundwater, surface water from Lopez Lake, and imported water from the State Water Project. However, Prolonged drought and changing environmental conditions have dramatically impacted southern San Luis Obispo County's water sources.

Projections by San Luis Obispo County indicate that Lake Lopez would reach a minimum pool condition in 2024, with no water available to downstream users. The State Water Project is an increasingly unreliable water source with the average allocations declining steadily over the past two decades.

Additionally, extensive monitoring has shown early signs of seawater intrusion. Currently, the cities of Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, and Pismo Beach cannot pump their full groundwater entitlement without risking seawater intrusion.

4. What are the benefits of Central Coast Blue?

Central Coast Blue will protect our groundwater basin from seawater intrusion, provide a new drought-resilient water supply for the region, and increase local control of our water resources.

The program will produce up to 3,500 AFY of new local water supply. Phase I will provide up to 900 AFY, increasing municipal groundwater supplies by nearly 30%. Phase II is expected to add up to 2,600 AFY to the basin.

- **Groundwater Protection:** Central Coast Blue protects the local groundwater basin from seawater intrusion by creating a freshwater barrier using purified recycled water.



- **Drought Resilient:** Central Coast Blue creates a new, drought-resilient water supply for the region by capturing lost water and using it to recharge the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin.
- **Local Supply:** Central Coast Blue reduces the region's reliance on unreliable imported water.
- **Water Reuse:** Central Coast Blue recovers and reuses a valuable water resource that is currently being discharged to the ocean.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Central Coast Blue leverages shared resources from three cities to minimize financial impact for ratepayers and maximize the benefits for the region.

5. How does Central Coast Blue work?

Treated wastewater from Pismo Beach's Wastewater Treatment Plant will be sent to a new Advanced Water Purification Facility (AWPF), where the water will be treated to meet drinking water standards. Purified water is injected into the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin to protect against seawater intrusion and replenish the community's water supply.

For more than 40 years, this scientifically proven process, known as potable reuse, has been used throughout California in communities such as Monterey, Los Angeles, and Orange County, as well as within communities around the world.

6. What are the program components?

Phase 1 of the program includes the construction of an Advanced Water Purification Facility (AWPF), eight groundwater wells, and two miles of pipelines. In coordination with Phase 1, the City of Pismo Beach plans to construct a new production well to replace an existing failing well. This component will be fully funded by Pismo Beach.

Phase 2 of the project would include an expansion to the AWPF to purify water from the South San Luis Obispo County Sanitation District (SSLOCSD) Wastewater Treatment Plant. Up to three additional injection wells and up to six additional monitoring wells would be constructed in Phase 2 along with interconnecting pipelines. The schedule for Phase 2 of the project has not been established. Phase 1 is a stand-alone, independent project and is in no way contingent upon Phase 2, which may be considered and constructed should additional water supply from SSLOCSD be needed in the future.

7. How much does the program cost?

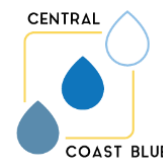
Construction of Central Coast Blue is estimated to cost \$93 million. For comparison, Lake Lopez cost \$16.5 million to construct in 1969, equivalent to \$138 million in 2023 dollars.

8. Why did program costs increase?

The estimated cost of the project has increased from \$49 million to \$93 million. The cost increase is primarily due to additional project features that were identified as the design was progressed past the conceptual phase and as a result of recent volatility in the construction market related to inflation, supply chain interruptions, and labor shortages. Cost increases have affected all sectors of the economy and are not unique to the construction market or public infrastructure projects. Due to continuing inflationary factors, project delays may lead to further project cost increases.

9. How is Central Coast Blue funded?

Central Coast Blue is funded by a combination of grants, low-interest loans, and ratepayer revenues. It is expected that up to 50% of construction costs will be funded by state and federal grants.



Central Coast Blue costs are shared among the cities of Pismo, Grover Beach, and Arroyo Grande and are based on a collaborative cost-share agreement. Pismo Beach is responsible for 39% of program costs, with Grover Beach and Arroyo Grande covering the remaining 36% and 25%, respectively. Each city will receive water supply benefits proportional to its capital investment.

10. What is the program timeline?

The project is currently in the permitting process and final design stage. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2024 and be completed in 2026.

11. Where can I find more information on the program?

For additional information on Central Coast Blue visit www.CentralCoastBlue.com or contact CCBRRWA's General Manager Geoff English at genlish@centralcoastblue.com.