

# Cambria's Quest for Water

## A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### 1862-1864

The Great Drought occurs. "...the creek dried up and cattle were driven over cliffs to end suffering."\*

### 1898-1899

Second worst drought in Cambria history. Slows completion of coastal rail route through SLO County.\*

### 1959

Cambria County Water District is formed.

### 1960

Monterey County's Weferling Fire spreads to Nacimiento and Cambria. Fire halted within one mile of Hearst Castle.

### 1972

- California Coastal Commission voted in by State with jurisdiction over coastal access, view shed and resources.
- Coastal Commission requires Cambria set aside a minimum 20% of resources for Visitor Serving Facilities (hotels/restaurants/campsites).

### Mid 1970s

Major drought results in over-pumping Santa Rosa Creek. Subsequently, CCSD acquires land adjoining lower San Simeon Creek to provide additional potable water to Cambria.

### 1988-1991

- Major drought causes CCSD and residents to adopt stringent conservation methods.
- Results in immediate 35% reduction in water consumption.
- Most restrictions still in force two decades later.

### 1993-1994

CCSD directors vote to pursue seawater desalination to provide reliable water supply to Cambria.

1860

1900

1960

1970

1980

1990

1999

### 1889

Major fire burns down Cambria's business district. Only 6,000 gallons of water available for fire fighting.

### 1966-1967

- Cambria residents call for election to request powers to provide Cambria with "water for domestic use, irrigation, sanitation, industrial use, fire protection and recreation."
- SLO County creates a services district with five elected directors to perform many public-benefit functions except land use planning.
- CCSD consolidates responsibilities of five existing special districts, expanding service area to current one.\*\*

### 1976

- The Cambria Community Services District (CCSD), a multipurpose special district, was formed under Community Services District law
- CCSD now provides water and sewer, fire protection, operation/maintenance of Vets Hall, public restrooms and other facilities, as well as ownership and management of the 440-acre Fiscalini Ranch Preserve.

### 1991

CCSD Residential Water Wait List is closed.

### 1986

CCSD Residential Water Wait List is formed.

### 1996

Seawater desalination plant is fully permitted and ready for construction bids.

### 1997

Proposed desalination design considered inadequate by new board of directors; permits allowed to lapse.

\*Dan Krieger, Cal Poly historian

\*\*Agencies combined: Cambria Community Services District: water and wastewater for Moonstone Beach Drive area; Cambria County Water District: water and sewer for most of community; Cambria Fire Protection District: fire protection for entire community; Cambria Garbage Disposal District: refuse collection and disposal for entire community; San Luis Obispo County Service Area No. 6: street lighting services for portion of community.

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**1999**

20-member Citizens Advisory Committee formed to study feasibility of seawater desalination. After lengthy research, Committee recommends desalination as best long-term, supplemental water supply.

**2001**

CCSD declares a water emergency and halts residential construction. Moratorium still in effect under State of California Water Code #350.

**2003**

CCSD Board approves seawater desalination as optimal long-term, back-up water supply and 4,650 residential water connections as total capacity of desalination facility.

**2004**

- CCSD Board votes to continue desalination design and obtain Federal funding assistance.
- CCSD staff distributes Notice of Preparation (NOP) for Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Water Master Plan.

**2005**

Congresswoman Capps secures \$3 million Federal credit for CCSD desalination research/design costs.

**2006**

- Army Corp of Engineers signs agreement with CCSD for \$10.3 million Federal appropriation to pursue design and construction of desalination project.
- SLO County approves CCSD plans to test drill on San Simeon beach.
- Citizens Finance Committee for Buildout Reduction Program (BRP) reports on feasibility of financing and implementation of BRP.

1999

2002

2005

2008

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**2000**

- Desalination advisory ballot sent to 7,800 CCSD water customers and property owners, posing question: "Should the Cambria Community Services District construct and operate a seawater desalination plant redesigned as of 4/14/2000 to provide a reliable backup water supply during dry seasons and droughts?"
- 58% of returned ballots support seawater desalination.

**2002**

CCSD staff begins Water Master Plan.

**2004-2008**

To improve fire fighting ability, CCSD installs major pipeline between Park Hill and Lodge Hill and replaces old Pine Knolls water storage tanks with higher capacity tanks.

**2007**

Coastal Commission denies desalination intake location and requests CCSD to study further.

**2007**

WRDA (Water Resources Development Act) approved at the federal level. Includes approval of \$3.5 million credit language for CCSD to provide match for desalination project.

**2008**

CCSD finalizes Water Master Plan Program EIR.

**2008**

CCSD proposes alternative site in Santa Rosa Creek for desalination project test drilling.