

San Luis Obispo County Desalination Executable Solution and Logistics (DESAL) USBR Feasibility Study

BACKGROUND

As a coastal region, San Luis Obispo County has an opportunity to explore ocean desalination as a reliable and resilient water supply to help adapt to climate uncertainties and address future water needs. A United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) WaterSMART grant has provided our region with funding support to study the feasibility of developing seawater desalination as a new source of water for our community.

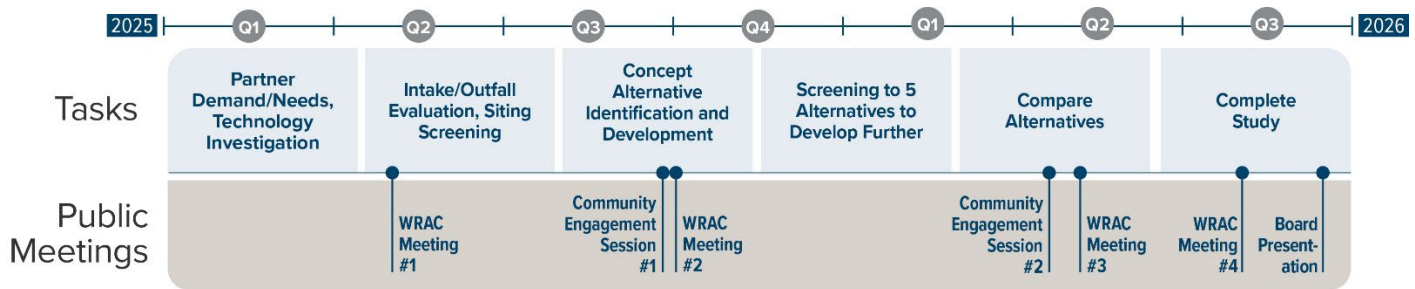


DESAL PLAN FEASIBILITY STUDY

The San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) and the sixteen (16) [DESAL Plan Partners](#) are in Phase 2: DESAL Planning Phase to prepare a feasibility study evaluating and comparing desalination project alternatives. This study will identify potential desalination locations and conceptual conveyance configurations associated with project needs while considering environmental, social and physical constraints of each project alternative.

No final decisions will be made during this phase. The feasibility study findings will support meaningful dialogue among partner communities on how desal could potentially help meet the region’s long-term water supply goals and support a water-secure future.

TIMELINE



PROJECT CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES

The following table shows the five project concept alternatives that are being explored and provides insight into some of the key considerations for each. These alternatives are being developed to better define potential supply benefits, to identify infrastructure needed and resulting impacts, to outline considerations for possible partnerships, and to estimate cost. Once the feasibility study is complete, local water agencies may consider taking steps to develop more detailed studies of any or all alternatives; this could include developing necessary partnerships and funding structures to support that further study, as needed.



ALTERNATIVES BEING DEVELOPED IN FURTHER DETAIL			
Alternative Location (North to South)	Ocean Outfall Pipe / Seawater Intake	Potential Users / Partners	Approximate Water Delivery in Acre-Feet/Year
Cambria	New Outfall / Subsurface intake	North Coast users: Cambria, San Simeon	300 - 600
Cayucos/Estero Marine Terminal	Estero Marine Terminal Outfall / Subsurface intake	North Coast and Central County users: Cambria, San Simeon, Los Osos, potentially other inland communities	900 - 1,100
Morro Bay	Morro Bay WWTP Outfall / Subsurface intake	North Coast, North County, Central County and South Coast users: Cambria, San Simeon, Los Osos, San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly, potential for exchanges with Nacimiento users and Paso Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, potential delivery through State Water Line pipeline to South Coast users	5,800 - 8,000
Near South SLO Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)	South SLO WWTP Outfall / Subsurface intake	South Coast and Central County users: Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Oceano, Avila, San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly, Los Osos, Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, potential for exchanges with Nacimiento users	5,000 - 6,800
Nipomo Mesa Refinery	Nipomo Mesa Refinery Outfall / Subsurface intake	South Coast users: Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Avila, Pismo Beach, Oceano, potentially Santa Barbara County users	1,800 - 2,000

Note: Alternative off-shore technologies will be discussed in the Feasibility Study through discussions of emerging and developing technologies as well as in the research needs section.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The project team will share current project information at key milestones of the study process to inform the public, partner agencies, the Water Resources Advisory Committee, the County Board of Supervisors, and other stakeholders on study approach, progress, outcomes, as well as gather input related to key aspects of the study.

The District will host in-person community engagement sessions during feasibility study development. Two identical sessions will be held on **April 20, 2026**, and **April 21, 2026** (details available at the link below). Interested community members are encouraged to join either session to provide their perspective about the feasibility study. To learn more about the project, frequently asked questions or the community listening sessions, including how to participate, visit our website at <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/desal>

