

Fall 2021



**SOAR**  
SAVE OPEN SPACE & AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

## GROUNDWATER VENTURA COUNTY

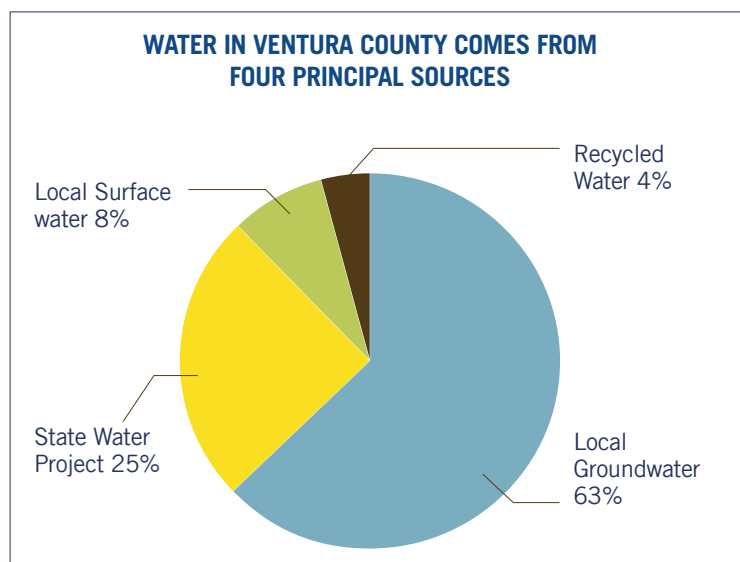
Ventura County has experienced an acute lack of rainfall over the last two years and the prospects don't look much better for the near future.

Though visible water reservoirs are scarce here, more than 160 water purveyors work diligently in Ventura County to keep water flowing from our taps. The continuing drought is making their jobs much more difficult.

Where does our water come from, who uses it, and what are the prospects for the future? The answers to these questions are vital to the future of SOAR and Ventura County.

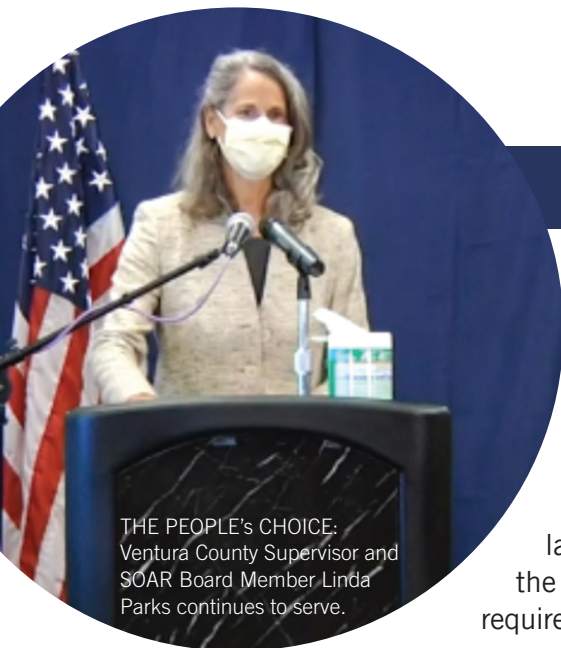
Water in Ventura County comes from four principal sources: local groundwater (63%), the State Water Project (25%) which mostly serves eastern parts of

the County, local surface water (8%), and recycled water (4%).



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## PARKS A FAVORITE FROM THE START



THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE:  
Ventura County Supervisor and  
SOAR Board Member Linda  
Parks continues to serve.

The anti-mask activists trying to recall County Supervisor and SOAR Board member Linda Parks came thousands of signatures short and so their effort fizzled out. Their failure to get voters to sign their recall petitions reaffirms the sentiment of voters for public health, for science, and against wasting tax dollars on a frivolous recall election. It also reaffirmed the popularity of the Supervisor, who ran unopposed in her last two elections. We look forward to the good things she will bring in her last year in office before she is termed out. We continue to be thankful for the will of the voters, who are the gatekeepers of the SOAR protections which require a vote of the people to rezone open space and farmland in Ventura County. ☆





More than 160 water purveyors – public and private, large and small – work to deliver 145 billion gallons of water each year to Ventura County municipal, industrial and agricultural water users.

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About 62 billion gallons, or 43% of total water consumption in the County, goes to municipal and industrial uses. Agriculture, a \$2.2 billion contributor to our local economy, uses the remaining 57% or roughly 83 billion gallons per year. Groundwater supplies 34% of municipal industrial use, and 85% of agricultural use.

**Given our County's dependence on wells from Ojai to the Oxnard Plain, careful management of our groundwater basins is vital. A delicate balance must be maintained to avoid over-drafting – taking out more groundwater than is going in over the years. This balance is particularly hard to achieve in times of drought, when groundwater recharge is almost nonexistent.**

To guard this vital resource, California enacted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act in 2014. The Act requires local governments to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and establish plans to reach sustainability in their groundwater basins in 20 years.

The plans are to address the undesirable results of surface water depletion, reduction of storage, degraded water quality, seawater intrusion, land subsidence and lowering of groundwater levels. They must consider and/or offset impacts to beneficial uses, including impacts to agriculture, the environment, disadvantaged communities, recreation, and Native American tribes.

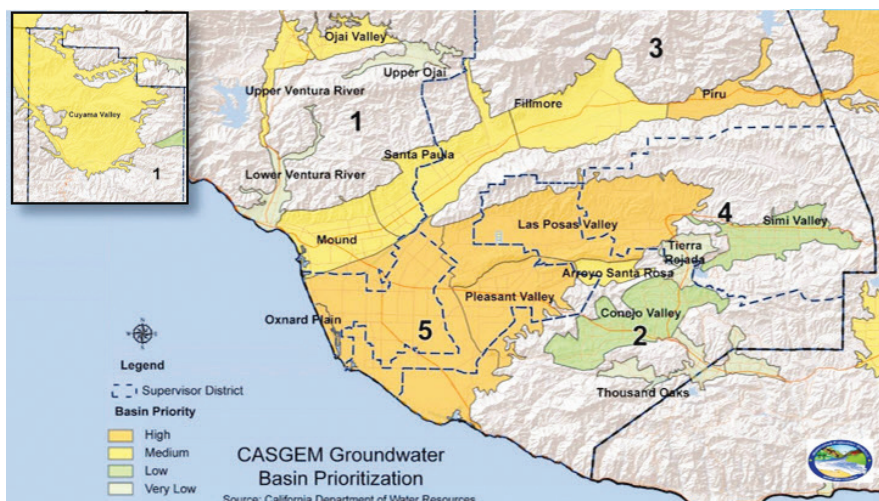
**For our future water supply, conservation and efficient use of the water we have are top priority. This includes working toward climate-appropriate agriculture and landscapes.**

Recent experience has taught us that when it does rain, we will get major downpours in shorter periods of time that will lead to local flooding. We need improved stormwater systems to capture this water, slow it, spread it, and sink it to replenish our groundwater supplies.

We also need to reuse runoff and stormwater, protect groundwater from contamination (from oil and gas, industrial uses and other sources), recycle wastewater, reduce water waste, and increase water conservation initiatives. Efforts are also afoot to bring imported state water to the west county.

These projects take time and money but they diversify the options for Ventura County beyond our present strategy which is: Don't worry, it will rain next year.

SOAR acknowledges the following information sources for this article: John Krist, CEO of the Ventura County Farm Bureau; Candice Meneghin with the Friends of the Santa Clara River; and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District. ☆



Groundwater basins supply 63% of total water demand in Ventura County and 85% of agricultural water use.



# YOUR VIGILANCE BEST PROTECTS FARMLAND WITHIN CITY LIMITS

What happens inside city SOAR boundaries, where farmland is not protected by a vote of the people? A 2.3 million square-foot Amazon warehouse rises from the Oxnard Plain.

The 2.3 million square foot Amazon distribution warehouse rising on the farmland between Rice Avenue and Del Norte Blvd in Oxnard is an example of SOAR's limits, and your importance.

**Codenamed Project Bruin** (as it is still referred to on the Oxnard Planning website), the Amazon warehouse was greenlighted in October 2020 after a 3-month environmental review. The warehouse has paved over 65 acres of prime farmland, part of the 430-acre Sakioka Farms Business Park Specific Plan approved by the Oxnard City Council in June 2012. The adjacent Arctic cold storage facility will convert another 32 acres. The fate of the remaining 230 acres of farmland between this initial construction and the 101 freeway remains to be seen.

Joe Mathews (VC Star, 9/19/21) notes that the transformation of recently closed prison sites *"opens a window on the peculiar predations of California progress."* At Deuel, the first California prison closed in a generation, Mathews found a thoroughfare lined with *"Amazon warehouses big enough to blot out the sun,"* along with distribution centers for Home Depot and US Foods, and other.

A former prison outside Stockton, Mathews writes, "lies amidst distribution centers and a massive intermodal facility

where cargo is switched from trucks to railcars on its way from warehouse to warehouse."

Is this the type of industry awaiting our farmland? With a deep-water port, a train and rail system running through our county, two general aviation airports, and the 101 and 118 interstate freeways connecting to the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, will Ventura County become a "warehouse center" piggy-backing on Amazon's location and logistics?

**Your grassroots efforts made SOAR and the protection of our farmland and open spaces in the unincorporated areas of Ventura County a reality.** But within the city limits of Ventura County's incorporated municipalities, farmland use is determined by city planning staff and city council votes. To ensure the farmlands within our cities are not sacrificed for low-wage warehouse operations, we all must engage at the local level, now.

With Ventura County experiencing its five warmest years on record in just the last seven, now is the time to speak up and support sustainable, green technologies – not large-scale logistic centers on farmland that fill our roads with big rigs, our lungs with pollution and our planet with carbon emissions.☆

## THE UNDERWOOD FAMILY FARMS

The pandemic brought its share of hardships to businesses, including the agricultural industry. Here in Ventura County, Underwood Farms weathered many challenges over the last year and a half and continually adapted to overcome them. People hungry for change found Underwood Farms to be a rare venue that was still open for a safe and enjoyable outdoor activity, and discovered or rediscovered the pleasures of u-pick fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables. Owner Craig Underwood tells us, *"In fact, we have never had so many people coming to the Farm to pick their own!"* A recent Gallup poll found more people across the world are cooking and baking at home, with beneficial impacts on the carbon footprint of our global food supply chains. We at SOAR support picking local while thinking global, and we can't think of a better way to do that than an outing at Underwood Farms. For more information visit [www.underwoodfamilyfarms.com](http://www.underwoodfamilyfarms.com). ☆





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## WHY SUPPORT SOAR NOW?

**Thanks to your tireless efforts, donations and votes**, SOAR's protection of open space and farmland in Ventura County extend to the year 2050. We still have 29 years on the clock, but we can't afford to sit back and relax. Threats to our open lands and quality of life continue, from farmland conversion inside city boundaries to groundwater depletion, water pollution, and climate-driven drought. Meanwhile the pandemic reminds us more than ever of the value of our open lands – as a source of fresh air, elbow room, and ecological and spiritual recharge, as well as tourism jobs, great food, and yes, even pumpkins.

**SOAR monitors and alerts people to the threats, reminds our elected leaders and communities of what is at stake, and helps ensure that we hold onto our right to have a say on the future of our County – from now until 2050, and beyond.**

We hope you can enjoy a brisk hike, a hay wagon ride, or a basket of fresh produce from your local CSA or farmers market this fall. And we hope you can keep SOAR going strong – for you and for future generations – with your donation or legacy gift today. ☆