

The County of Orange Report

Prepared for the Mesa Water District

September 24, 2021
by Lewis Consulting Group

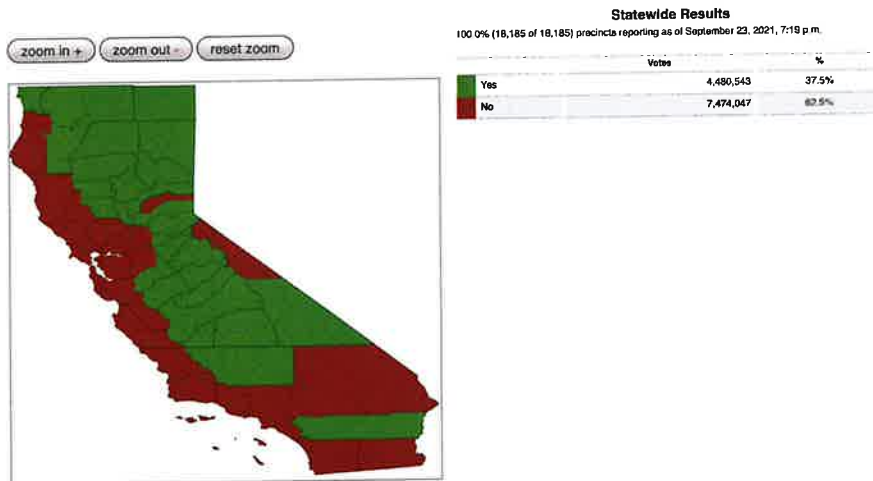


Recall Defeated in a Landslide

This time the polls were right. However, even the pollsters couldn't account for the late surge in NO voters. Apparently Governor Newsom's strategy of tying leading candidate Larry Elder to President Trump in a barrage of advertising paid dividends. Recent statewide polls have captured the liberal sentiment on a myriad of issues that Californians now support.

One interesting take on the election was the stark difference between heavily populated urban counties and lightly populated inland counties. The map below depicts that visually.

THE TWO CALIFORNIAS










* The recall failed in San Bernardino county by the narrowest of margins, otherwise the map would have filled in more perfectly.

Orange County Narrowly Votes NO

"Orange County is where good Republicans go to die", this quote from President Reagan seemingly belongs to a by-gone era. The defeat of the recall - 52% NO, in the former conservative bastion, provides further proof of the "blueing" of Orange County. The County ended up joining all but one of California's coastal counties in opposing the recall of Governor Newsom. In the 2022 elections, Republicans will try to buck the trend by preserving their narrow margin on the Board of Supervisors and defending the Congressional seats held by Young Kim and Michelle Steel. The off Presidential election cycle, coupled with President Biden's declining popularity might help their cause.

Final Pre-Election Recall Polls

Poll source	Date(s) administered	Sample size ^[a]	Margin of error	Yes on recall	No on recall	Undecided
The Trafalgar Group (R) 	September 11–13, 2021	1,082 (LV)	± 3.0%	45%	53%	2%
SurveyMonkey/Momentive 	August 31 – September 13, 2021	3,985 (LV)	± 1.6%	41%	55%	4%
Emerson College 	September 10–11, 2021	1,000 (LV)	± 3.0%	40%	60%	1%
Data for Progress (D) 	September 2–10, 2021	2,464 (LV)	± 2.0%	43%	57%	–
SurveyUSA 	September 7–8, 2021	930 (LV)	± 4.2%	41%	54%	5%
Suffolk University 	September 6–7, 2021	500 (LV)	± 4.4%	41%	58%	1%
Berkeley IGS 	August 30 – September 6, 2021	7,917 (LV)	± 2.0%	38%	60%	1%



LAFCO'S Strategic Planning Workshop

"LAFCO serves Orange County cities, special districts and the County to ensure effective and efficient delivery of municipal services". This newly crafted and proposed LAFCO mission statement was the first order of business at the lengthy workshop held on September 8th. The workshop was facilitated by Marilyn Snider of Snider and Associates.

Following several breakout sessions, the participants collaborated on crafting goals, accomplishments, strengths, weaknesses, future trends and three year goals.

THREE-YEAR GOALS

2021 - 2024 * not in priority order

- Optimize external communication
- Facilitate a continuing dialogue of South County governance options
- Refine and enhance the MSR process

IDENTIFY THREE-YEAR GOALS

Brainstormed list of possible goals from which the Three-Year Goals were developed

- Provide outstanding customer service.
- Focus (continue to focus) on external communications and engage the public
- Increase Public Awareness
- Fulfill state mandates.
- Participate in legislative committees.
- Update/adjust the work plan in light of COVID-19 and other external forces
- EO/AEO continue outreach and communication plan to stakeholders
- Streamline future MSR process for reconfirmation.
- Develop a program to educate local leaders on governance issues
- Improve legislative advocacy/platform.
- Shared services opportunities-potentially public safety as an area of importance
- Continue to develop staff in all levels
- Continue with the process of South County Governance by informing and facilitating decisions relating to organizational alternatives and timing, including review of existing community interrelationships and SOCCC.
- Accelerate and expand MSR process to look at (a) remaining unincorporated islands and (b) redundancies/inefficiencies and economies of scale in service delivery.
- Process county islands and other applications
- Balance commission structure

STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ORANGE COUNTY LAFCO

Brainstormed List of Perceptions from all Participants

- Santa Margarita Water District annexation
- Fully staffed- assistant executive officer
- Legislative reports
- Updates to Commission
- Municipal service reviews
- Actions in accordance with the CKH Act
- Commission deliberation
- Diligent and professional staff
- Leadership by EO
- Development of staff
- Improved outreach to stakeholders
- Proactive on County/City/District Issues
- Surviving COVID – business continuity
- Processing and completing applications without undue delays (notably San Juan)
- Increasing community presence/outreach
- Completed MSRs scheduled for the year
- Completed MSR for San Juan Capistrano for the divesture of their water and wastewater utility
- Completed the review and consultation with SJC and Santa Margarita Water District for annexation of SJC's water and wastewater utility
- Consulting with south county un-incorporated communities about future governance options
- Significant projects of work plan completed.
- Improved agency branding and communications tools.
- Enhanced communications with commissioners
- Filled staff vacancy and maintained morale in pandemic environment.
- Strengthened collaboration with southern region EOs, staff, and commissioners.
- San Juan water/wastewater utilities annexation.
- Efficient operations despite challenges with the pandemic
- Fiscally sound agency
- We continued to do business during Covid
- We continued outreach in south county
- We instituted a nice newsletter (lafco update)
- We stuck to business. No mission creep (remember homeless was almost put into our strategic plan a couple years ago?)



Summer Doldrums for Supervisors

The most recent Board of Supervisors meeting on September 14, 2021 along with the upcoming September 28 and October 5, 2021 Board meetings have dealt largely with non-substantive issues. One noticeable change has been the recent cessation of COVID-19 updates from County Public Health Officer Dr. Clayton Chau. Perhaps the Board members have tired from the repetitive public comment “putdowns” from the anti-vaccine attendees or they may have also wanted to stop what they perceive as “grandstanding” on the issue by new Supervisor Katrina Foley.

COVID-19 Plateaus in the County

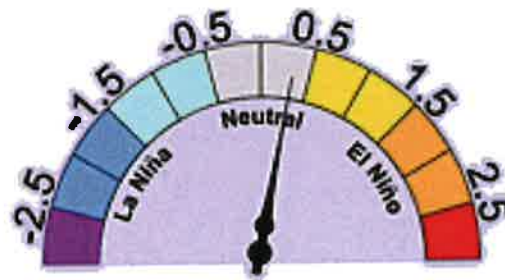
The uncertainty associated with the Delta variant created fears of a return to the horrible days of the first COVID-19 peak. That has not happened. After an early spike in new cases, hospitalizations and deaths, the numbers have stabilized and in some cases started to decline. A major factor appears to be the high vaccine rates among the most vulnerable (elderly, obese or immune compromised).

ORANGE COUNTY COVID-19 STATS	AS OF 9/23/2021	AS OF 8/19/2021
CUMULATIVE CASES TO DATE	294,871	278,417
CUMULATIVE DEATHS TO DATE	5,371	5,169
DEATHS REPORTED TODAY	8	4
CUMULATIVE TESTS TO DATE	4,976,573	4,534,970
TESTS REPORTED TODAY	16,435	12,644
CASES CURRENTLY HOSPITALIZED	313 *	571 *
CASES CURRENTLY IN ICU	87	133
CUMULATIVE RECOVERED TO DATE	279,753 *	256,640 *

* = INCLUDES *ICU* CASES

Return to La Niña?

ENSO METER



According to the National Weather Service "a transition from ENSO - neutral to La Niña is favored in the next couple of months with a 70%-80% chance of La Niña during the Northern Hemisphere winter 2021-2022". This unfortunately lessens the chance of drought busting rain.

California Reservoirs Take It On the Chin

The prolonged drought has taken its toll on California reservoirs water levels. Leading the way in the bad news department, is the San Luis Reservoir which is only at 12% of capacity.



SELECTED WATER SUPPLY RESERVOIRS

Midnight: September 22, 2021

