

MOUNTAIN COUNTIES WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION

AMADOR COUNTY

PRELIMINARY**DESCRIPTION**

Amador County (population 34,000) lies approximately 50 miles from Sacramento, California, on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada between the South Fork Cosumnes River and the Mokelumne River. Elevations vary from 150 feet in the west to 9,332 feet at Mokelumne Peak in the east. There are five cities in the county making up approximately 35 percent of the total population.

Many water systems rely on old mining-era ditches for conveyance. Although there are no well-defined groundwater basins in Amador County, many people in the rural areas rely on groundwater from wells in fractured rock with unpredictable yield.

EXISTING WATER SUPPLY

The present source of water for four of the five cities is surface water from the Mokelumne River. The water is obtained by tapping into the storage and major conveyance facilities of Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). One city is using a combination of wells and surface supply diverted from the Cosumnes River through a ditch system. Jackson Valley Irrigation District has a limited supply of surface water from an interior watershed (Jackson Creek). The remainder of the county relies on the limited groundwater.

WATER DEMAND

In 1994, the County's total urban and agricultural water demand was approximately 26,000 acre-feet. By year 2020, the total demand will be 37,000 acre feet, and year 2030 over 40,000 acre-feet.

SUPPLEMENTAL WATER SUPPLIES

Groundwater supplies throughout Amador County are not reliable in terms of quantity and quality. Supplemental water to meet increasing water demands will be derived from a reduction in conveyance losses and from new supplies. Most likely, new supplies will have to come from the Mokelumne River. New supplies from the Mokelumne River will require arrangements with PG&E and/or East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and Colusa County Water District (CCWD) for use of their storage facilities.

PROBLEMS/CONSTRAINTS

The problems or constraints for Amador County to meet its increased water demands are as follows:

1. **Environmental** -- Environmental issues are anticipated in implementing programs for water conservation and new water supplies. Reducing seepage losses along existing ditches may be an issue to the extent wetlands have become established. Increasing diversions from the Mokelumne River may also be an issue.
2. **Legal** -- Obtaining additional supplies from the Mokelumne River will require new agreements involving one or more of the parties with existing rights or entitlements. The parties include PG&E, EBMUD, and CCWD.
3. **Financial** -- The cost to implement measures to reduce conveyance losses is approximately \$9 million. Costs of this magnitude are extremely expensive in relation to the revenue base in Amador County.