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## **Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District**

### **Spring 2018 News, Vol 6, Issue #1**

## **Proposed Sewer Trunk Main Replacement Project to Improve Sonoma Valley Sewer System**

The Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (SVCSD) is in the planning stages of a proposed sewer trunk main replacement project that is now slated for construction in the spring of 2019. Since 1994, the SVCSD has completed approximately 9.7 miles of major capacity and structural improvement projects at a cost of \$14.9 million.

As part of the ongoing effort to increase the system's capacity and prevent sanitary sewer overflows, the SVCSD is carrying out 1.8 miles of high-priority projects over the next several years. The project is proposed to replace older sewer lines that have reached the end of their life expectancy and to increase the size of the sewer trunk main as required by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board's 2015 Cease & Desist Order. The purpose of the project is to improve the sewer trunk main's ability to reliably handle wet weather flows. The project will also help to prevent leaks in the system and reduce sanitary sewer overflows, which occur during heavy rains and can allow wastewater to enter creeks.

The first phase of the project is expected to get under way starting in 2019. The multi-year project would replace a portion of the existing sewer trunk main alignment in three phases:

- 1st Phase – From the intersection of 6th Street West & Studley Street, north to Highway 12, and up to Ramon Street;
- 2nd Phase – From Ramon Street and Highway 12, through Maxwell Farms Regional Park, to West Verano Avenue;
- 3rd Phase – From West Verano Avenue to Buena Vida Court to Happy Lane

Background information on the purpose of and need for the proposed sewer trunk main replacement, construction schedule, environmental review process and timeline is available at: <http://www.sonomacountywater.org/svcسدsewerproject>.

## **Recycled Water Pipeline on 5th Street East Completed**

SVCSD has completed construction of a \$3 million recycled water pipeline that will provide landscape irrigation for playing fields at Sonoma Unified School District (School District) facilities, including Sonoma Valley High School. The School District is currently

in the process of a master plan for its irrigation systems. Delivery of recycled water will commence when the master plan is completed.

The recycled water pipeline project received approximately \$1 million in state Proposition 84 grant funding (the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006). “Recycled water is a sustainable supply of water that can keep playing fields green even in drought conditions,” said Sonoma County Water Agency Director Susan Gorin. “Purchasing local recycled water will reduce the cost of water for both the School District and the City of Sonoma, and decrease the amount of energy used to transport the water, which currently comes all the way from the Russian River.”

The recycled water will also be used to offset potable water used to irrigate the City of Sonoma’s Engler Street Park. In addition, approximately 7 agricultural users along the pipeline route have signed agreements to use recycled water from the pipeline along the 5th Street East route. Water to the agricultural customers will be available this spring. The SVCSD will be providing training in the safe use of recycled water for all customers.

The SVCSD, which is managed by the Sonoma County Water Agency, currently provides recycled water for agricultural irrigation in Sonoma Valley and supplies recycled water for restoration of salt ponds back to natural habitat (see page 3).

Sonoma Valley meets its water needs through a combination of Russian River water and groundwater. Water from the Russian River travels over 30 miles in a series of pipes to Sonoma Valley and the amount of water available is dependent upon drought conditions. The Sonoma Valley groundwater basin has localized decline of groundwater levels, and offsetting groundwater pumping with recycled water use is one way to reduce groundwater declines.

Using recycled water to irrigate playing fields and parks will reduce Sonoma Valley’s reliance on water from the Russian River. The use of recycled water for agricultural irrigation along the pipeline route will help reduce groundwater pumping.

## **How Your Sanitation District Budget Works**

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) strives to operate and maintain sanitation facilities in an environmentally responsible and fiscally prudent manner. As part of its financial duties, the Water Agency each year publishes proposed changes to sewer service fees in accordance with Proposition 218. The fiscal year for the districts and zones begins July 1 of each year and runs through June 30 of the following year, so the information in this notice is for the period from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. A five-year capital plan is prepared for the district based on the need for replacement of aging collection systems and other assets necessary to process the wastewater according to regulatory requirements. Budgets take into account current maintenance and operations costs, any bond or loan repayments, and the necessity to maintain

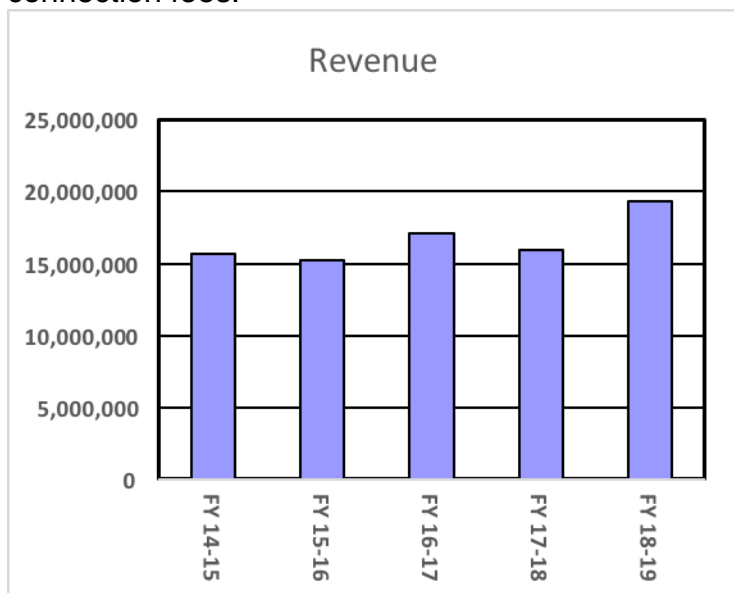
sufficient financial reserves to cover unexpected damage or system failures. Budgets are developed using estimates for these items and for revenues. For some systems, the revenues generated from user fees are not sufficient to keep pace with the rate in which equipment is wearing out. For such systems, fee increases are set incrementally above the rate of inflation to generate a reliable source of funding to replace worn out equipment before it fails.

## Budget Approval

After the proposed budgets and rates are developed, the budgets are available for public review at libraries throughout the county and at the Water Agency office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa. They are also available online. Typically, this happens at the end of March. In addition, notices of the proposed rates are mailed to the owners of the properties in the districts and zones at that time. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, which are typically held in mid-May at the Board of Supervisors chambers. (A protest form and rate hearing information are available on pages 6-7 of this notice).

## Budget Summary Revenue

The primary source of revenues are the user fees charged to the district ratepayers and collected on property tax bills sent out by the Sonoma County Tax Collectors Office. Additional revenue sources include grants, interest on fund balances and new connection fees.



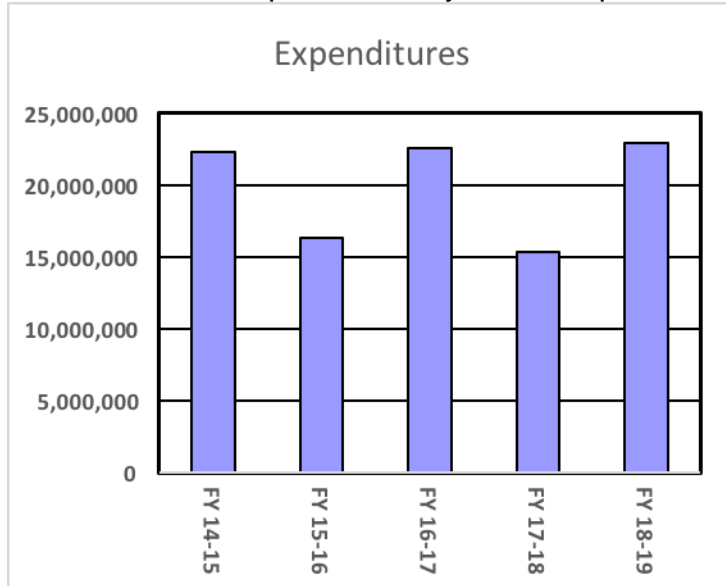
## Expenditures

Your district spends money to:

- Operate the wastewater collection and treatment facilities;
- Maintain and repair district facilities;
- Repay bonds, other debt and miscellaneous liabilities that may occur as a result of operation; and

- Replace aging infrastructure or make capital investments needed to comply with water quality standards and regulations.

Your district also spends money to accomplish the capital projects needed in the zone.



## Recycled water being sent to salt ponds

In 2014, the SVCSD completed a recycled water pipeline to the Napa Sonoma Salt Marsh, to aid in the transition of bittern ponds to restored bay lands. The former Cargill salt pond complex at the north end of San Pablo Bay has the potential to provide diverse wetland habitat, but the area wasn't able to be fully restored without clean water to eliminate the bittern left over from the salt production process.

The 3.4 miles of pipeline that extends an existing recycled-water pipeline, has the ability to deliver 3.5 million gallons of recycled water a day for salinity reduction and restoration of 640 acres of bittern ponds, part of a larger 10,000-acre restoration project.

The project took 10 years, \$10 million dollars, coordination across two counties, easements across private property, the cooperation of countless organizations to complete and numerous grants from state and federal agencies. Hypersaline conditions harm aquatic life and this pipeline will help protect against saltwater intrusion into the bay and dilute the toxic bittern salt concentrations, creating habitat for fish and wildlife.

The pipeline will allow 1,100 to 1,700 acre-feet of recycled water annually to be delivered from the SVCSD treatment plant to the former salt ponds. Each acre-foot of water can flood a football field one foot deep.

## District will cap sewer laterals for homes burned during fire

The Sonoma Complex Fire had far-reaching impacts on Sonoma County. Within the SVCSD, 65 homes were destroyed by the Nuns Fire. For those homes that were destroyed in the fire, sewer laterals must be capped in order to keep harmful, fire-related debris from entering the collection system and ending up at the treatment plant.

In addition, the uncapped laterals could allow erosion and surface runoff to enter the collection system. In many cases, this debris and runoff could contain toxic substances that can be harmful to the SCVSD treatment plant.

The Water Agency, which manages and operates the SCVSD, will enter into agreements with contractors to perform two tasks to remedy this problem.

The first task will involve using a camera to locate the sewer lateral on each parcel, and mark that location. The second task will be to excavate the lateral, cut and cap the lateral, and replace the dirt over the lateral. The depth and location of the lateral will also be marked by the contractor. Work on this project is anticipated to get under way in the summer of 2018. Property owners will not be required to pay for this work if it is performed by the Water Agency contractor.

## Career Pathway Program

In July, 2017, the Water Agency and Sonoma County Human Services Department began a pilot program through the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps (SCYEC). The new SCYEC Career Pathway Program (CPP) began with six young people working on a six-month Water Agency Stream Maintenance Program crew. The crew worked on creek restoration projects, playing an integral role in maintaining critical flood control infrastructure projects across the county. In January, the crew began the second half of the program, working in individual placements in the Water Agency and for Sonoma County Regional Parks. Three of the six Water Agency CPP participants decided to continue their work with the Stream Maintenance Program, while one each is working with the Water Transmission Mechanics, the Water Education group and with Wastewater Collections.

“I didn’t know jobs like these even existed before coming to the Water Agency” said Mario Luna, an intern in the Wastewater Collections section. Mario has been learning and assisting the maintenance crew responsible for conducting video surveys for over 110 miles of pipeline throughout the county. Crews check for cracks, leaks, root intrusion and grease buildups. “I am working towards getting my collections certificate and will hopefully find a career in the water industry.”

A new CPP crew began in January 2018 and will work in the field for six months, transitioning to individual placements in the summer. While CPP participants work at the Water Agency and other county departments, they are employed by the non-profit Conservation Corps North Bay.

## Spring 2018 Public Tours

### Wastewater Treatment Plant and Recycled Water Production Tours

The Water Agency is pleased to host free public tours of the Russian River County Sanitation District and the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District. Come learn about where wastewater goes after it flows down the drain, how wastewater is treated, and how water is recycled and reused as a new resource after treatment.

#### Sonoma Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant Tour

Saturday, April 7th, 2018 – 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (SPANISH)

Saturday, April 28th, 2018 – 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (ENGLISH)

#### Russian River Wastewater Treatment Plant Tour:

Saturday, May 5th, 2018 – 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (ENGLISH)

Tour registration is required. To learn more and to register, please visit <http://www.sonomacountywater.org/tours>. Registration will be confirmed via email. Children must be 12 years old to attend a tour and must be accompanied by an adult.

Keep checking back on the <http://www.sonomacountywater.org/tours> website for Russian River water supply walking tours, which will be announced in the summer of 2018. Tours will be available in Spanish and English

**Questions?** Please contact Sophie Porcelli at (707)524-6430 or [Sophie.Porcelli@scwa.ca.gov](mailto:Sophie.Porcelli@scwa.ca.gov).

## Water Rebates in your District

### Sanitation District water saving rebate programs available

As a sanitation customer, you have some water saving tools at your fingertips! Please take advantage of the following water saving program which is offered on a first-come, first-served basis while funding lasts:

**Clothes Washers:** Receive up to \$50 back on the purchase and installation of a new, qualifying high-efficiency clothes washer (HEW). Rebates are available for all Energy Star Most Efficient listed clothes washers except those containing silver ion technology.

For more information, go to <http://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/washer-rebate>

## Proposition 218

### Sonoma County Water Agency Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District

### Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Proposed Sewer Service Fee Increase

#### Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On May 22, 2018, at 2:20 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (District) will conduct a public hearing to consider increasing the annual sewer service fee (Sewer Fee) and make rate structure modifications.

If approved, the increased Sewer Fee and rate structure modifications will become effective on July 1, 2018.

The Sewer Fee will be imposed on each parcel upon which is located one or more structures which are connected to the system and the Sewer Fee will be collected on the general property tax bill administered by Sonoma County. Payment of the Sewer Fee will be the responsibility of the owner of the parcel.

#### Reasons for the Sewer Fee and Use of the Funds Collected

The Sewer Fee is imposed to recover the District's cost of providing sewer service, including: (a) to finance the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the system; (b) to pay the capital replacement program costs of the system, which provides for the long-term replacement of system facilities as they wear out; and (c) to maintain sufficient reserves. The District's Sewer Fee is reviewed annually to determine if adequate revenues are being collected for these purposes.

The draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2018-19 describes the District's total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, c/o the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California 95403, and the Sonoma County Regional Libraries in Santa Rosa (Main & Northwest), Windsor, Healdsburg, Cloverdale, Guerneville, Sebastopol, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Rincon Valley, Sonoma, and Forestville (El Molino High School).

#### Calculation of the Sewer Fee Increase

The District has two categories of users:

- A) Non-Residential Users and Residential Users with No Public Water Connection.** This category of users has a Sewer Fee with one component: a fixed charge component. NOTE: Residential Users that have a Public Water Connection but have no water usage in winter months and multi-family complexes including condominiums with only one Public Water Connection for all of the units are also included in this category.



- B) Residential Users with a Public Water Connection.** This category of users has a Sewer Fee with two components: a fixed charge component and a volume-based component.

The method for calculating the Sewer Fee for each category of user is described in more detail below.

- A) Amount of Proposed Sewer Fee Increase for Non-Residential Users and Residential Users with No Public Water Connection.** Effective July 1, 2018, the District proposes to increase the charge per Equivalent Single-Family Dwelling (ESD) from \$968 per ESD per year to \$1,016 per ESD per year for users in this category. This represents an increase of \$48 or 5.0% versus current year. This increase to the ESD charge has been calculated by dividing the annual costs of providing wastewater treatment and collection service by the total estimated number of ESDs in the District.

A standard single-family home constitutes one ESD. Parcels which have other uses (for example, apartments and commercial buildings) will be assigned a number of ESDs using standard equivalency factors which estimate the probable quantity and quality of sewage effluent normally generated by such uses in comparison to a single-family home.

The Sewer Fee for Non-Residential Users and Residential Users with No Public Water Connection is calculated as follows:

$\$1,016 \text{ per ESD} \times \text{Assigned Number of ESD's} = \text{Annual Sewer Fee}$

- B) Sewer Fee Increase Proposed for Residential Users With a Public Water Connection.** All residential sewer customers with a public water connection must pay a Sewer Fee with two components: a fixed charge and a volume-based charge. The Residential Users with a Public Water Connection category includes single family dwellings, multiple-family units, apartments, and mobile home parks. A multi-family complex or condominium complex will also fall within this category if each unit in the complex has its own public water connection.

1. Fixed Charge Component: The fixed charge component of the Sewer Fee recovers 70% of the District's costs to provide sewer services, including costs that the sewage treatment and collection system incurs regardless of increased or decreased sewage flow into the system.

Effective July 1, 2018 the District proposes to increase the fixed charge to \$711 per ESD per year for residential users with a public water connection. This represents an increase of \$34 or 5.0% versus current year.

The fixed charge component of the Sewer Fee will be calculated as follows:



$\$711 \text{ per ESD} \times \text{Number of ESD's} = \text{Fixed Charge Component of the Sewer Fee}$

2. Volume-Based Component: The volume-based component recovers approximately 30% of the District's costs to provide sewer service, including costs to the sewage treatment and collection system that vary with the amount of sewage conveyed and treated. The District's volume-based component uses a customer's lowest winter water use (November – March) as the basis for the calculation. Winter water use generally provides the best available estimate of indoor water use and its impact to the District's treatment facilities because outdoor irrigation is usually minimal during the winter months. The volume-based component also gives District ratepayers the opportunity to control a portion of their sewage bill.

The Volume-Based Component of the Sewer Fee has three parts, which are multiplied together:

$\text{Winter Water Usage} \times \text{Number of Billing Periods Annually from your Water District} \times \text{per thousand gallon} = \text{Volume-Based Component of Sewer Fee}$

Effective July 1, 2018, the District proposes to increase the volume-based component charge from \$5.49 per thousand gallons to \$5.76 per thousand gallons for residential users with a public water connection. This represents an increase of \$0.27 per thousand gallons or 5.0% versus current year. Each residential user with a sewer connection and a public water connection with winter water use greater than zero will be charged as follows:

Total Sewer Fee (fixed charge + volumetric charge) for Residential Customers with a Public Water Connection

*For Customers with a Valley of the Moon Water District bill:*

$\$711 \text{ per ESD} \times \text{Number of ESD's (Fixed Charge Component)} + \$5.76 \text{ per thousand gallons} \times \text{Lowest Winter Water Usage in thousand gallons} \times 6 \text{ billing periods annually (Volumetric Charge Component)}$

*For Customers with a City of Sonoma Water District water bill:*

$\$711 \text{ per ESD} \times \text{Number of ESD's (Fixed Charge Component)} + \$5.76 \text{ per thousand gallons} \times \text{Lowest Winter Water Usage in thousand gallons} \times 12 \text{ billing periods annually (Volumetric Charge Component)}$

### **Estimate Your Sewer Fee**

Single Family Dwelling customers with a Public Water Connection and Winter Water Usage may estimate their sewer service charge by using the District's online estimator at: <http://www.sonomacountywater.org/svcscd>

Other customers may contact the District at (707) 526-5370.

### **Appeal Procedure**

If you have a leak in your water supply line or another reason that you feel the metered water use during the measurement period does not reflect your actual usage, contact the District at (707) 526-5370 to determine whether an adjustment is warranted.

### **Further Information Available Prior to the Hearing**

At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance which will establish the increased Sewer Fee. A copy of the ordinance is on file and available for review at the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. In addition, the following persons may be contacted at the Agency at (707) 526-5370 for further information and/or obtaining copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2018-19:

Kathy Badger, Administrative Aide

Lynne Rosselli, Administrative Service Officer II.

### **Protest Procedure**

This notice has been mailed to you because records of the Sonoma County Assessor list you as an owner of one or more parcels within the District which will be subject to the Sewer Fee while connected to the system. In the event you have sold property you may have owned within the District, please send this notice to the new owner.

Either prior to or at the public hearing, property owners, or tenants who are directly liable for the payment of the Sewer Fees, may submit written protests respecting the Sewer Fee. At the public hearing, the Board will consider all written protests which have been received by the prescribed deadline. In order to be considered, a written protest must be made on the attached form. Only one protest will be counted per parcel. Only protests signed by the current owner(s), or tenant(s) directly liable for paying the Sewer Fee, will be allowed and must be received no later than the following deadlines:

- If submitted by mail, they must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 21, 2018, at the mailing address on the attached Written Protest form.
- If hand delivered, they must be delivered no later than the close of the public hearing on May 22, 2018 to: Clerk of the Board, Board Meeting Room, as set forth in the opening paragraph

**Date of this Notice: March 30, 2018**

## Rate Protest Form

**Note: In order to be considered, any protest must be on this form**

### Written Protest

I am the parcel owner of the property located at the address on the back of this form, or a tenant that is directly liable for paying the sewer service fee for the property. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed sewer rate increase.

### Additional Comments:

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Use opposite side or attach additional sheets if needed.

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Signature of Property Owner Required

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Print Name

Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District  
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

<http://www.sonomacountywater.org/SVCSD>