



County of Santa Cruz

Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.scceh.com
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us



AGENDA

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

Wednesday April 3, 2024, 4pm

This meeting will be held in hybrid format. Commissioners are expected to attend in person.

In-Person: 701 Ocean Street; **Fifth Floor Redwood Room**

Remote via Teams: [Click here to join the meeting](#); Meeting ID: 294 065 319 40, Passcode: nbtBPc;

Phone Conference [+1 831-454-2222](tel:+1831-454-2222); Passcode 429 577 793#

A. OPENING

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Elections of Officers as outlined in Santa Cruz County Code 2.38.120:

(1) Commission officers shall be elected during the commission's first meeting after the commission is established at which a majority of the members are present. Annually, thereafter, commission officers shall be elected during the first meeting in April, or if the commission does not meet in April, at the next subsequent meeting. Commission officers may serve for up to two consecutive years and shall be eligible to serve again after a one- year "sit-out" period.

B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Opportunity for the public to comment on items under the purview of the Water Advisory Commission but not on today's agenda.

C. CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine in nature and will be acted upon in one motion. Specific items may be removed by members of the advisory body or public for separate consideration and discussion. Routine items that will be found on the consent agenda are meeting minutes, drought response updates, and Groundwater Sustainability Agency updates.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for February 7, 2024

2. Update on County Drought Response
3. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
4. WAC Meeting Schedule for 2024

D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Opportunity for Commissioners to provide brief updates

E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. PFAS in the County

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been found in water sampled in a few locations in the County. General Services will provide an update on their project to remedy the problems at the Sheriff's Rehab well which services the Rountree facility. Commissioner Pereyra will share findings from his research.

Attachment: Staff Memo

Report from Commissioner Pereyra

2. Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction and Wildlife Protection Act.

Presentation from representatives of the Santa Cruz Land Trust on the proposed property tax initiative that will be on the ballot in November.

Attachment: Summary

Final Text

FAQs

Presentation Slides

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES

1. Commission Restructuring Update

Staff has revised the Commission Code and Bylaws based on comments received from the Commissioners at the February 3rd meeting, and from County Counsel.

Attachment: Updated Santa Cruz County Code Chapter 2.96, redline and clean
Updated WAC Bylaws, redline and clean

2. Well Ordinance Update Status

Update on activities since the last WAC meeting

Attachment: GW Supply Challenge Areas

H. CORRESPONDENCE

Thank you letter from Board Chair Justin Cummings for the work of the Commission

I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:

March 26, 2024

[15748 : Adopt resolution authorizing grant application submission for California Wildlife Conservation Board Stream Flow Enhancement Program funding to increase capacity of Large Woody Material Management Program, and take related actions \(Health Services Agency\)](#)

[Letter of Brian Lockwood, Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission - Request for Letter to State Offices Seeking Comprehensive Incident Reports on Big Basin Water Company Failure](#)

March 12, 2024

[DOC-2024-208 : Authorize the creation of a second zone in County Service Area 7 in Boulder Creek, formally serviced by the Big Basin Water Company, and accept proposed increased sewer service assessment charges for Fiscal Year 2024-25, and take related actions \(Community Development and Infrastructure\)](#)

February 13, 2024

[DOC-2024-130 : Approve agreement for the Northern Santa Cruz County Integrated Regional Water Management Program; authorize the Auditor-Controller to process payment to the Regional Water Management Foundation up to \\$10,000 annually, and take related actions, as recommended by the Director of Health Services](#)

J. ITEMS OF INTEREST

- LAFCO Report: <https://santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/BBWC-Governance-Report-3-6-24-Final-Version.pdf>
- Soquel Creek Water District Updates: [Soquel Creek Water District General Manager Announces Retirement](#); and [Soquel Creek Water District Board Appoints Melanie Mow Schumacher as Next General Manager](#)

K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

L. ADJOURNMENT



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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

**Wednesday February 7, 2024, 4pm
Minutes**

This meeting was held in hybrid format.

In-Person: 701 Ocean Street; Fifth Floor Redwood Room and Remote via Teams

A. OPENING

1. Call to Order, 4:03pm
2. Roll Call

Commissioners present:

- Cheap
- Gillespie
- Largay (20 min late)
- Lego
- Pereyra
- Wilson
- Lockwood

Staff: Sierra Ryan, Erin McCarthy

Public: David McNair; Joe Serrano (LAFCO); JM Brown

B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

None

C. CONSENT AGENDA

Move to approve by Lego, second Gillespe, all in favor

D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Opportunity for Commissioners to provide brief updates

Pereyra: Commend PV Water on projects underway, rate proposals underway by SqCWD, anxiety exists around rates; PFAS, four sites identified in south County may be emerging issue; requested as a future meeting topic.

Sierra: will ask General Services to present on their approach to dealing with PFAS

Lego: San Andreas Mutual moving forward with PFAS settlement, moving forward well and may wrap up soon; had a positive trace detection in one well; filing is important (even if no detection now) so can be part of a settlement.

Gillespie: Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 5 requires monitoring for 30 compounds including PFAS by 2025 for public water systems; PGE costs and other increasing costs are leading to rate increases, in addition to SqCWD, increases are also proposed by SLVWD

Cheap: PGE history of mistakes, Erin Brockovich movie; neighbor has well with smart meter that helped detect excessive use; smart meters would be great; does our lab test for PFAS? No.

Gillespie: PFAS treatment - currently best option is GAC, will have to go to hazardous waste facility;

Lockwood: notice of rate increase for PV Water was part of 5-year sequential increase, approved in 2021 and going till 2025; attended LAFCO meeting today, dissolution of College Lake Reclamation District

Largay: no update

E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates

Sierra: only a few streamwood reports, no major flooding issues; coordination with outreach coordinator; presented to Dept Heads and CAO office earlier in the week; provided an overview and updates on big projects; 8600 AFY is benefit to be expected by ongoing major water projects;

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. Big Basin Water Company Next Steps

Many BBWC customers have expressed interest in consolidating with SLVWD; is there a role for WAC or Supervisors?

Sierra: secured \$850K secured from SWRCB, JM Brown in attendance was instrumental, \$200K to explore next steps.

Joe Serrano (LAFCO): BBWC is private entity, LAFCO to oversee public agencies but it a big part of County; many helping to figure out best sustainable solutions for residents; court appointed receiver to provide temporary relief; LAFCO writing a report exploring options and story of how we got here, including history of BBWC (formed in 1930s); leave it to residents and others to identify best options; options that may or may not be feasible:

- Annexation to local agency (SLVWD may be most logical answer but there are other issues, not easy); another Water District could annex it
- Form a new water district
- Form a CSA for County to oversee
- Form mutual water company
- Another private water company buy it

Coordinating with nonprofit organization to develop road map for these options, grant-funded to do that; hopefully identify which option makes most sense, collaboratively; provided update today at LAFCO meeting

WAC can help by:

- Provide feedback on draft report
- Help communicate to residents that we are trying to work together on solutions

Lego: infrastructure cost to bring BBWC up to snuff?

Serrano: that's the big question

Sierra: \$40M given as a back of the envelope, high end, cost to be annexed to SLVWD; 460-600 connections

Lego: that's about \$80K/connection; San Andreas Mutual is about \$45K/connection

Sierra: engineering assessment funded by our grant should determine better numbers

Largay: suggest looking to acquisition of CalAm assets by SLVWD (2003-2005) as a precedent;

Serrano: could form assessment district; how prevent this from happening again? AB 454 required LAFCO to get info from Mutual Water Companies; In recent water utility assessment, LAFCO looked at all public agencies and mutual water companies so that we knew they existed; next steps will include building a relationship with them, let them know we are resource, and are not looking to force consolidations; interested in looking for best solutions to prevent bad situations from happening.

Peyrera: are others struggling?

Serrano: others have reached out to let us know they may need help; interested to know what their issues are and how LAFCO can be helpful;

Sierra: WAC implements drought response plan and County is regulator for small water systems; we have grant funding and one deliverable is a guidebook for small water systems and State small water systems; what else can we do, what else do they need?

Largay: clarification of small water companies, mutuals etc.

Sierra: small public water systems = under 200 connections; state smalls are under 15 connections; governance is different; CPUC involved in regulating private companies only;

Sierra: what lessons have been learned? Agencies and partners involved in the BBWC situation meet every other week, last call had 26 people on it; costs to keep water flowing have been extremely high; group indicated that no one has documented what went wrong; learning opportunity, not finger pointing opportunity; state didn't have list of receivers, slowed process; County stepped in because no resource to pay operator and homes were close to having no water supplied; no invoicing process; one water source; WAC could offer request to agencies to evaluate what didn't work; includes request to legislators; minimum standards, insurance requirements;

Largay: gratitude to those who kept system going through holidays; this is public asset so anticipate private markets will transition to public; in private marketplace, buyer and seller hold up their end of the bargain; concerned about BBWC should be bankrupt and owners held responsible; public should not have to bear those costs

Lego: set of requirements weren't here when company started; need some level of enforcement of requirements, but also a funding source to help water companies get there; as mutual, can't do much because constituents don't want water rates to go up; need appropriate set of carrots and sticks;

Steinbruner: listened to LAFCO meeting today; interested in community writing this down; reservation about using BBWC owners as an example, would damage relationships trying to encourage cooperation; having another Connect the Drops would be good; Big Basin Public Initiative are customers that could be involved, customers have a say; funding source would be helpful;

Brown: echo importance of multiagency collaboration; calls impressive; many indicated support for lessons learned because could create legislative pathway to handle these issues; earlier enforcement may have been helpful for things to not have gotten so bad. Thanks for agendaing.

Sierra: proposal to create subcommittee and letter to call for a lessons learned report from involved agencies.

Serrano: great recommendation; how prevent misconceptions about who benefits- let community be part of process so they aren't being told what to do and were part of it.

Sierra: need motion and volunteers

Lockwood: Is a subcommittee necessary?

Cheap: I think we can have Sierra write the letter.

Lego: **move to ask Sierra to write the letter requesting to document lessons learned to go to Supervisors, second by Largay; all in favor**

2. Commissioner Stipend Program

Sierra: Questions on this?

Lego: is stipend to make it easier to diversify membership?

Sierra: yes, stemmed from Santa Cruz Like Me initiative; not sure if public agency members are eligible;

Cheap: any precedence that stipend increases diversity? Don't know.

Largay: was on a parks committee that used a stipend and it helped people

Sierra: need to clarify income limitation and deadline to opt in or out

Steinbruner: also approved that members as young as 14 could serve

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES

1. Commission Restructuring Update

Sierra: outcome was to clarify roles and distinguish from other Commissions; remove focus on habitat and leave that to FWAC; codify oversight of SB552. Need to move to Rosenberg Rules of Order. Like to receive input on changes to bylaws and ordinance and next time bring draft.

Lockwood: evaluate how subcommittees are formed (bylaws Section E needs to be updated);

Discussion about relationships and similar interests of FWAC, Commission on Environment and InterCommission Commission

Sierra: will make modifications and bring to next meeting; agendize the work plan for future meeting

2. Well Ordinance Update Status

Sierra: met with Public Trust representatives and addressed concerns; concerns included cumulative impacts of de minimis wells; concern that 2AFY is too high of a cutoff and should meter wells at or below that usage. We exchanged information to address those concerns.

Lego: seal depth requirement?

Sierra: 100 ft proposed.

TAC meeting held on 1/29/24; receiving feedback on draft changes; working on policy and ordinance changes;

3. Water Advisory Commission 2022-2023 Biennial Report

Lookwood: look at items on list, suggest we have an item on a future agenda regarding the work plan.

H. **CORRESPONDENCE**

None

I. **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:**

No discussion

J. **ITEMS OF INTEREST**

No Discussion

K. **AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

PFAS in the County

Work Plan

L. **ADJOURNMENT**

6:07pm



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Subject: April 3, 2024 Water Advisory Commission Consent Agenda

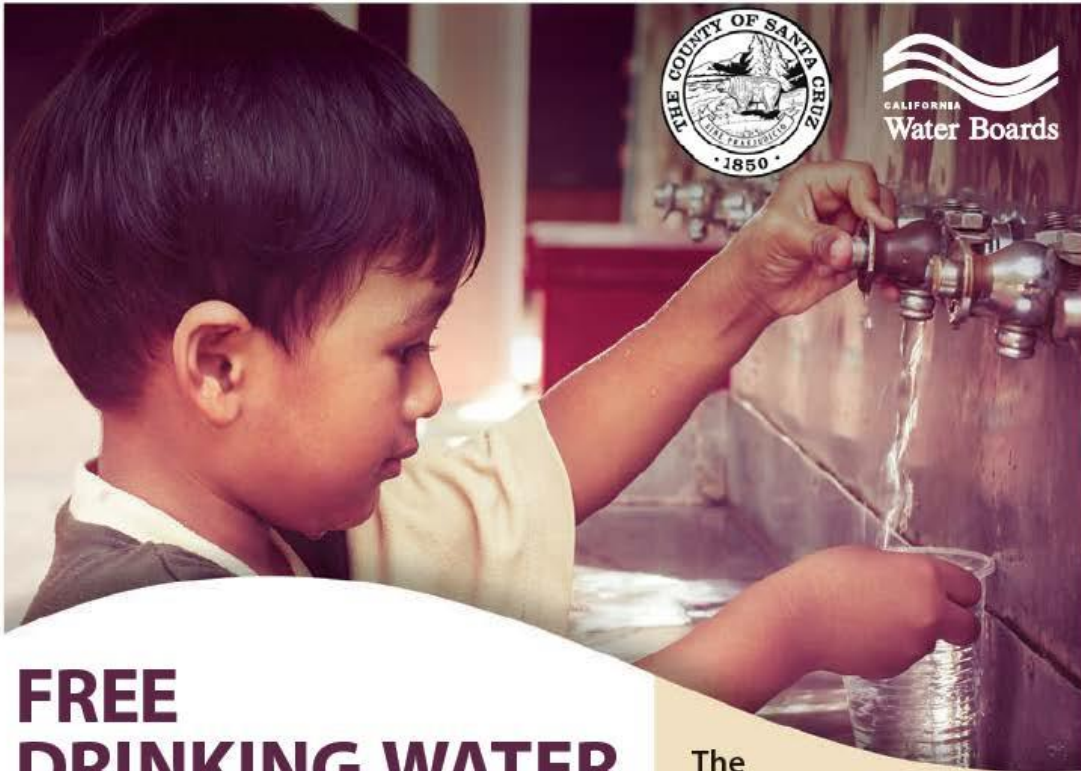
Title: Drought Response & Outreach Plan (DROP) Update

Background

On September 23, 2021, Senate Bill (SB) 552 was signed into law. SB 552 requires that “a county shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county’s jurisdiction”. The Water Advisory Commission voted to adopt the responsibility for implementing SB 552 and receives quarterly updates on the progress of implementation. [Senate Bill 552 Compliance \(scceh.org\)](http://scceh.org)

Updates:

- Santa Cruz County is partnering with the [Central Coast Drinking Water Well Testing Program](#) to combine our well testing programs. The County has been able to combine what would have been two independent outreach and sampling efforts, which should result in significant savings. Well testing should kickoff in May. An example of the English version of the flier is below.
- County Staff continues to work on contracts for bottled water delivery, water treatment system installation, water quality testing, and outreach assistance.
- Jennifer Hernandez, with Supervisor Hernandez’s office (no relation), began an internship with the program and has assisted with outreach preparation and Spanish translation.
- County staff continues to update the support webpages for both [Private Well Owners](#) and [Small Water Systems](#). With the assistance of Jennifer Hernandez, the translation software on the pages was reviewed and found to be accurate.
- Sierra Ryan continues to represent interests of local government at the State [Drought Response Interagency Partnership \(DRIP\) Collaborative](#).



FREE DRINKING WATER WELL TESTING

for Santa Cruz County

What the program offers:

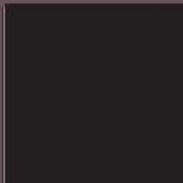
- **Free well sampling is being offered to persons who get their drinking water from a domestic well.**
- **Test results and information on how to interpret the results.**
- **Information on free replacement drinking water programs for eligible households.**
- **Information on free treatment systems for eligible households.**

The testing is focused on common groundwater contaminants known to pose health effects.

Contaminants*:

- **Have no color or odor**
- **Boiling the water does not make it safe to drink**
- **Can cause serious health effects, especially in pregnant women and children**
- **Can cause certain types of cancer and birth defects**

* Contaminants include: arsenic, nitrate, 1,2,3 -TCP, hexavalent chromium, perchlorate, total dissolved solids, and more.



For more information or to schedule your free testing:
Scan the QR Code, using your smartphone

Visit: centralcoastwelltesting.org

Call: 844.613.5152



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Subject: April 3, 2024 Water Advisory Commission Consent Agenda

Title: Groundwater Sustainability Agency Updates

Background

There are three groundwater basins in the County subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The following updates come from the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies tasked with managing and monitoring those basins.

Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency

- Conservation of Water: The PV Water Board approved an agreement with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County for Agriculture Water Conservation Program Services, in an amount not to exceed \$1,073,931 through June 30, 2027, and directed staff to allocate an additional \$300,000 for conservation program rebates over the same time period.
- Funding
 - In an effort that began in fall 2022, PV Water closed on two Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) 35-year loans totaling \$74.2 million on February 20, 2024:
 - Loan 1 funds the College Lake Integrated Resources Management Project and was issued in the amount of approximately \$43 million at an interest rate of 4.46%. With this loan, the College Lake Project is fully funded.
 - Loan 2 funds the Watsonville Slough System Managed Aquifer Recharge & Recovery Project and was issued in the amount of approximately \$31 million at an interest rate of 4.47%. PV Water will need to issue additional debt, the amount of which could be reduced by grant funding, to fully fund the project.
 - Department of Conservation (DoC) Multibenefit Land Repurposing Grant, \$8.89 million: includes funding for PV Water and partners the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, the University of California, Santa Cruz, the Santa Cruz County Land Trust, the Pajaro

River Flood Management Agency, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, and the Nature Conservancy: PV Water's staff are attending regular meetings with DoC staff and the "Statewide Support Entity." Staff and consultants are preparing sub-grantee agreements and preparing to develop a request for proposals for consultant support to facilitate and prepare the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Plan.

- DWR SGMA Implementation Grant, Round 1, \$7.6 million: supports College Lake Project pre-construction activities: DWR has approved Invoice No. 6 for \$187,300. The grant is within the last 10% of funds meaning DWR will hold payment as retention until the grant is complete and DWR issues PV Water the final retention payment.
- DWR Watershed Resilience Pilot Grant, \$2 million: The Board adopted a resolution authorizing the General Manager to enter into discussions and an agreement with DWR on February 21. PV Water Staff and consultants met with DWR Staff to review the draft agreement and discuss ideas for the scope of work on March 13, 2024. Staff will develop a draft scope of work to present to DWR over the course of the next month.
- Recycled Water Facility Optimization
 - Reliability, Operations, and Condition Assessment Project: Received and reviewed electrical study focusing on Standby Power Options and Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs) at the Recycled Water Facility. Staff is working with the electrical engineer to prepare a scope and budget to design the recommended standby power options and VFD upgrades to improve the reliability of the Recycled Water Facility in the event of a long-term (i.e. months) power outage.
- College Lake Integrated Resources Management Project
 - Construction:
 - Weir Structure
 - No new work this last month due to saturated conditions.
 - The contractor is implementing the Winterization Plan.
 - Water Treatment Plant
 - Decanting lagoons: the contractor continues work on the decanting lagoons.
 - Construction of Electrical Building continues.
 - Construction of the Chemical Storage Facilities.

- Contractor is continuing to monitor soil consolidation.
 - Raw Water Pipeline
 - Construction of the raw water pipeline commenced in December but was paused for a time due to wet weather conditions, work has recently resumed.
 - Treated Water Pipeline
 - Contractor reports that 5 miles of the 6-mile pipeline is complete.
 - Construction in Riverside Road / Hwy 129 began on January 8, 2024; construction activities are currently taking place at Grove Street and work will be advancing toward Main Street. Work continues to occur during both day and night shifts although work may be limited to day shifts only as the construction site advances into the more residential neighborhoods.
- Environmental: Biological, Cultural, and Native American resource monitoring is taking place and worker environmental training continues.
- Adaptive Management Plan: Hydrologic monitoring, waterfowl monitoring, and steelhead surveys occurred this year and/or continue to occur. Waterfowl surveys were conducted on at least 20 separate days in 2023, and at least 6 separate days in 2024 thus far. The annual vegetation survey took place between October 2 and October 13, 2023, and the final report is complete.
- Outreach Activities: Staff continues to present to the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau's Public Policy Committee monthly; commercials focused on pipeline construction in Riverside Road ran in January; updated commercials will run in April. The Pajaronian and Look Out Santa Cruz have recently published articles covering the Project. Please check <https://www.pvwater.org/construction>; regularly for construction related updates.
- Watsonville Slough System Managed Aquifer Recharge & Recovery Projects
 - Permitting: Ongoing.
 - Design: Basis of Design Report (i.e. 30% submittal) is complete and under review.

- Environmental: The Biological Assessment and Aquatic Resources Reports are now complete; Addendum to the EIR is nearly complete; staff and consultants met with staff from the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on March 14 to discuss the project's potential impacts and mitigation measures.

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency

- The Santa Margarita Board met on February 29th. The Board:
 - Received an update on the ongoing groundwater sustainability program.
 - Received the Water Year 2023 Annual Report for the basin and authorized its submittal to the Department of Water Resources.
 - Received a preliminary budget estimate for Fiscal Year 2025.
 - Reappointed its 2 private and 1 alternate well owner representatives.
- The Agency recently made updates to its website to improve public access to basin monitoring data (<https://www.smgwa.org/BasinMonitoring>).
- The Agency will meet again on May 23rd.

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency

- The Mid-County Board met on March 21st. The Board:
 - Received an update and provided direction on a policy to implement a well registration, metering, and reporting program for non-de minimis users of groundwater in the basin.
 - Received an update and provided direction on the required Plan Evaluation of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. The Agency is expected to receive a draft of the Plan Evaluation by June 1st.
 - Received an update on preliminary findings of a seawater intrusion investigation in the Seascape area of the basin. Additional investigation is being planned to further define the problem.
 - Received the Water Year 2023 Annual Report for the basin and authorized its submittal to the Department of Water Resources.
 - Received a preliminary budget estimate for Fiscal Year 2025.
- The Agency will meet again on June 20th.

By: Sierra Ryan, Water Resources Program Manager



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Subject: Water Advisory Commission Schedule for 2024

The Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission Meetings for 2024 are as follows:

February 7, 2024
April 3, 2024
June 5, 2024
August 7, 2024
October 2, 2024
December 4, 2024

By: Sierra Ryan

Water Resources Program Manager



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Subject: April 3, 2024 Water Advisory Commission Consent Agenda

Title: PFAS in the County

Attachments: Report by Commissioner Pereyra

Background:

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances – known as PFAS – are widely found in the environment, do not degrade quickly, and have been linked to a host of health risks. There are thousands of PFAS chemicals that have been used in a broad range of consumer products. There is currently not an established maximum contaminant level (MCL) for PFAS chemicals, but there are monitoring requirements, notification levels, and levels over which action is recommended. The science and policy is still catching up to the prevalence of these chemicals in the environment. This item is informational.

Sheriff's Rehab :

The General Services Department reported to the Board at the March 26, 2024 meeting with the following information:

The Sheriff's Rehab water system (No. CA4400762) is subject to Health and Safety Code Section 116455 i that requires notification of the Sheriff's Rehab governing body in the event that PFOA, PFOS, PFBS and/or PFHxS levels exceed the notification levels set by the State Water Board Resources Control Board. This past January we sent a notification letter informing you of the presence of contaminants in the groundwater that is served to Rountree Facility perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS) and perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS) in the groundwater that is served to our Rountree Facility. The County performs regular testing to monitor these contaminants. Whenever an increase above the previously highest reported notification value is detected, a notification such as this is reissued to your attention. The PFHxS is reported at 3.6 (ng/L) over the prior quarter's reporting

period of 3.3 (ng/L). A summary of the levels associated with water delivered by this water system is posted in the table below:

Sheriff's Rehab		
Well-1 - PS Code: CA4400762-001-001		
PFOA, PFBS & PFHxS ⁱⁱ results; samples drawn 02/12/2024		
Results (ng/L)	Notification Levels (ng/L)ⁱⁱⁱ	Response Levels (ng/L)¹
PFBS = 3.6 (ng/L)	PFBS 500 (ng/L)	PFBS 5000 (ng/L)
PFHxS = 3.6 (ng/L)	PFHxS 3.0 (ng/L)	PFHxS 20 (ng/L)
PFOA = 6.1 (ng/L)	PFOA 5.1 (ng/L)	PFOA 10 (ng/L)

If a chemical is present in drinking water that is provided to consumers at concentrations considerably greater than the notification level, the response level, DDW recommends that the drinking water system take the source out of service. However, currently, the water system is continuing to monitor the levels in our source(s) and has not exceeded the response level at this time. Additional information will be provided to our customers in the Sheriffs Rehab Consumer Confidence Report that comes out next year. The Sheriffs Rehab water system is actively involved in a project to develop and install the first water treatment system in our region designed to address these contaminants.

Several other water systems have had PFAS detections, including the Buena Vista Migrant Center located adjacent to Sheriff's Rehab. Despite the role Environmental Health plays in drinking water regulation through the Local Primacy Agency, there is not currently a role for the County in PFAS monitoring, reporting, regulation, or enforcement outside of the systems the County operates.

By: Sierra Ryan

Water Resources Program Manager

Santa Cruz Water Advisory Commission

Commissioner's Report: Ray Pereyra, 2nd District.
(Revised: 3/28/2024)

PFAS in South Santa Cruz County - A glance at some available information

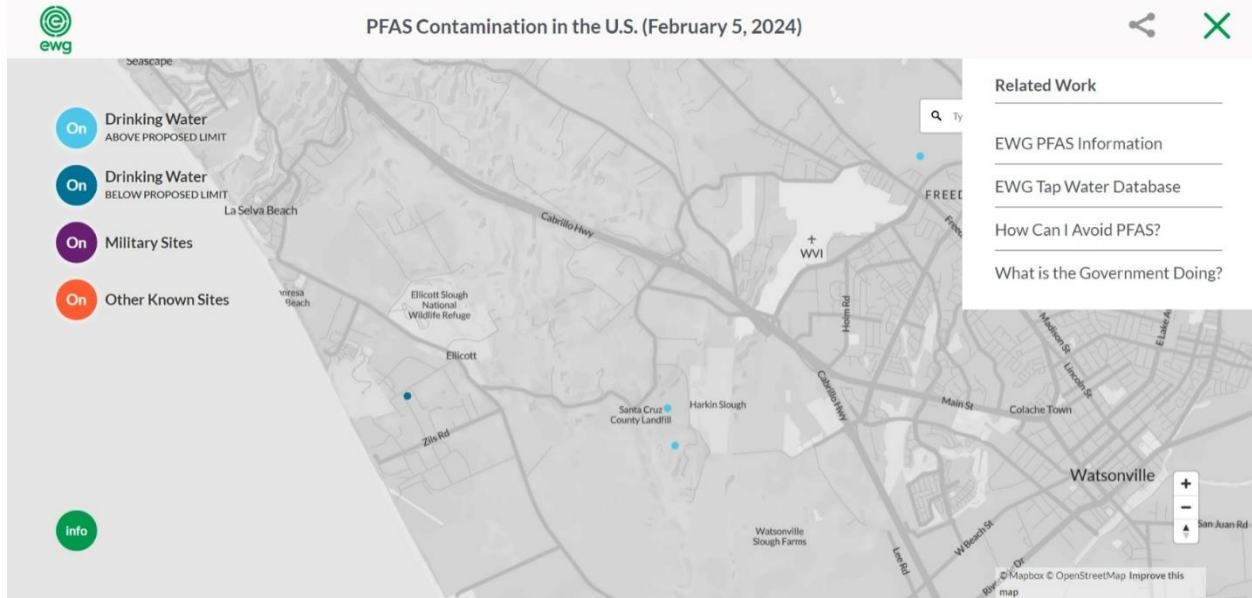
(Excerpts of available online information)

- On February 13, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael S. Regan announced the availability of \$2 billion from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to address emerging contaminants, like Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in drinking water across the country. This investment, which is allocated to states and territories, will be made available to communities as grants through EPA's Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) Grant Program. These grants aim to promote access to safe and clean water in small, rural, and disadvantaged communities while supporting local economies. The grant program focuses on projects that address the challenges of PFAS in drinking water, whether it is found in the public water system or in source water. Additionally, projects that address any contaminant listed in any of EPA's Contaminant Candidate Lists are also eligible. For more detailed information, you can refer to the EPA's Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Grant Program.
- PFAS compounds are a class of non-stick, waterproof, stain-resistant compounds used in consumer products and industry. Best known are PFOA, formerly used to make DuPont's Teflon, and PFOS, formerly in 3M's Scotchgard.
- PFOA and PFOS: An enforceable limit of 4 parts per trillion (ppt) for each of these individual contaminants. (Proposed)
- More information *Bloomberg Investigates: the Forever Chemical Scandal* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8qGtEVh7oQ>

Mapping the PFAS contamination crisis: New data show 5,021 sites in 50 states, the District of Columbia and four territories

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=pfas+map+usa&q=MT&pq=pfas+map&sk=LS1&sc=10-8&cvid=FDE59D8DEEA74E67AFA2F15569E9D15F&FORM=QBRE&sp=2&ghc=1&lq=0#>

A map of the four PFAS identified sites in South Santa Cruz County (11/9/23).



Summary of PFAS data from the site information sheet for each of the four identified sites

PFAS Contamination Location	Population Served	Chemical Types	Total PFAS (ppt) 11/9/2023	Comments/Observation by Ray
San Andreas Mutual Water	350	2	3.8	Below proposed limit
City of Watsonville	65,739	6	23	Above proposed limit Large population Watsonville jurisdiction
Sheriff's Rehab	150	6	23	Above proposed limit Water users are incarcerated and county staff
Buena Vista Migrant Center	455	8	63	Exceeding above proposed limit. High number of PFAS identified. Economically disadvantage Mostly, undereducation. Family groups

Buena Vista Migrant Center data sheet

PFAS Contamination in the U.S. (February 5, 2024)

System name: Buena Vista Migrant Center
State: California
Population served: 455

PFAS detected:

Chemical	Years tested	Maximum Level (ppt)
PFBS	2019-2023	19
PFHxS	2019-2023	6.3
PFHxA	2019-2023	4.3
PFOS	2019-2023	12
PFOA	2019-2023	19
PFPeA	2023	2.2
PFHpA	2019-2023	3.4
PFNA	2019-2023	3.7
Total PFAS	2019-2023	66

Source: EWG from <https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/system.php?pw=CA4400763>

Levels listed are for the maximum of each PFAS detected at the time of the tests and do not reflect whether a water system is treating the water to reduce levels.

Pictures of Buena Vista Migrant Center and Surrounding Buildings, Watsonville



Buena Vista Migrant Center. The Buena Vista Migrant Center in Watsonville is scheduled to open on April 3, 2024. It will provide 102 rental units for migrant farmworker families during the peak harvest season.



Family Residences/Apartments next to the Migrant Center



Hope Services Building



Santa Cruz Landfill Buildings in proximity of the Migrant Center



Sheriff Rehab Buildings in proximity of the Migrant Center

PFAS

“These studies indicate that exposure to PFOA and PFOS over certain levels may result in adverse health effects, including developmental effects to fetuses during pregnancy or to breastfed infants (e.g., low birth weight, accelerated puberty, skeletal variations), cancer (e.g., testicular, kidney), liver effects (e.g., tissue damage), immune effects (e.g., antibody production and immunity), thyroid effects and other effects (e.g., cholesterol changes).”

Please see U.S. EPA Technical Note for more information:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-12/documents/ffrofactsheet_contaminants_pfos_pfoa_11-20-17_508_0.pdf

CA Migrant Farmworkers Housing closes

“Migrants at the Buena Vista center in Watsonville said their tap water had a strange smell and looked cloudy. They bought bottled water instead of drinking it. A small sign in the laundry room warned the center’s water contained the chemical Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) “above the public health-based response level.” But the explanation was printed only in English.”

BY LINDSEY HOLDEN AND MATHEW MIRANDA UPDATED DECEMBER 13, 2023, 4:19 PM
(Page 7-8 of 22, Sacramento Bee)

(Internet search)

<https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article281816338.html>

Office of Land and Emergency Management December 2019 Interim Recommendations for Addressing Groundwater Contaminated with PFOA and PFOS Fact Sheet

“During the 45-day public comment period, the agency received nearly 300 public comments that included a wide range of perspectives on the draft interim recommendations. A number of commenters suggested using values that were higher than the recommended screening level and PRG and others suggested using values that were lower. Since 2016, EPA has determined that drinking water concentrations of PFOA and PFOS of 70 ppt or lower offer a margin of protection for all individuals throughout their lives from adverse health effects resulting from exposure to PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. EPA also believes 70 ppt is appropriate for use as a Preliminary Remediation Goal (PRG) for CERCLA purposes as a first step in the process of developing cleanup levels at a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) site.”

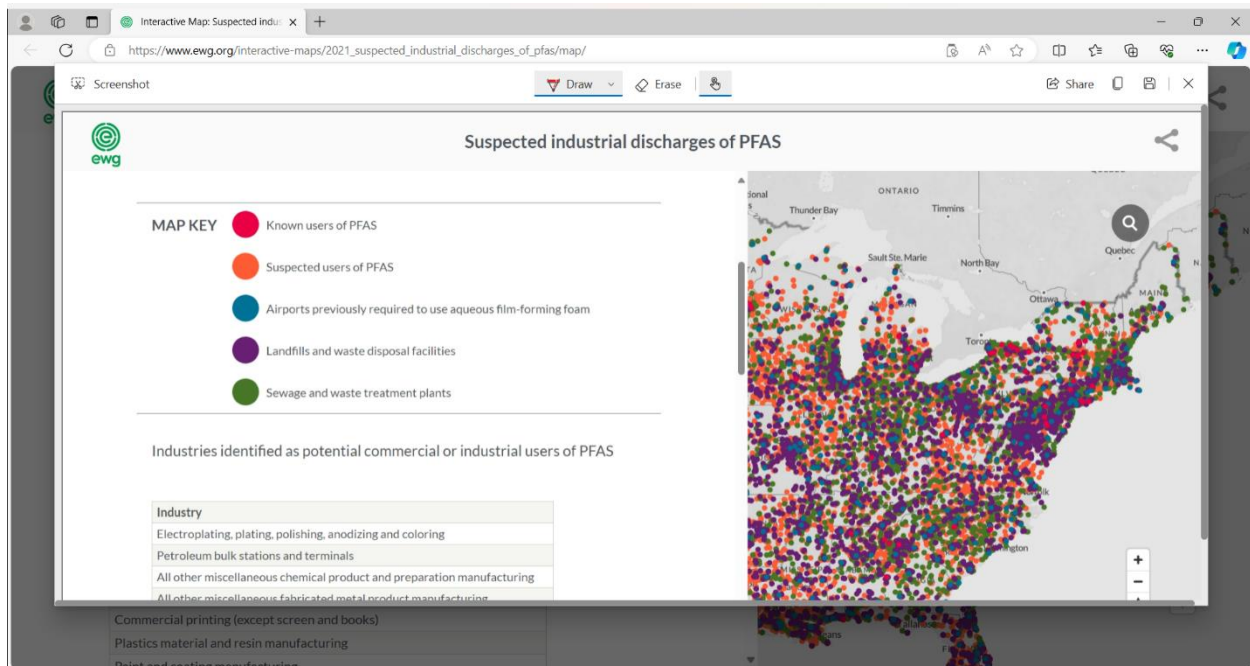
https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/documents/pfas_groundwater_fact_sheet.pdf

Suspected industrial discharges of PFAS

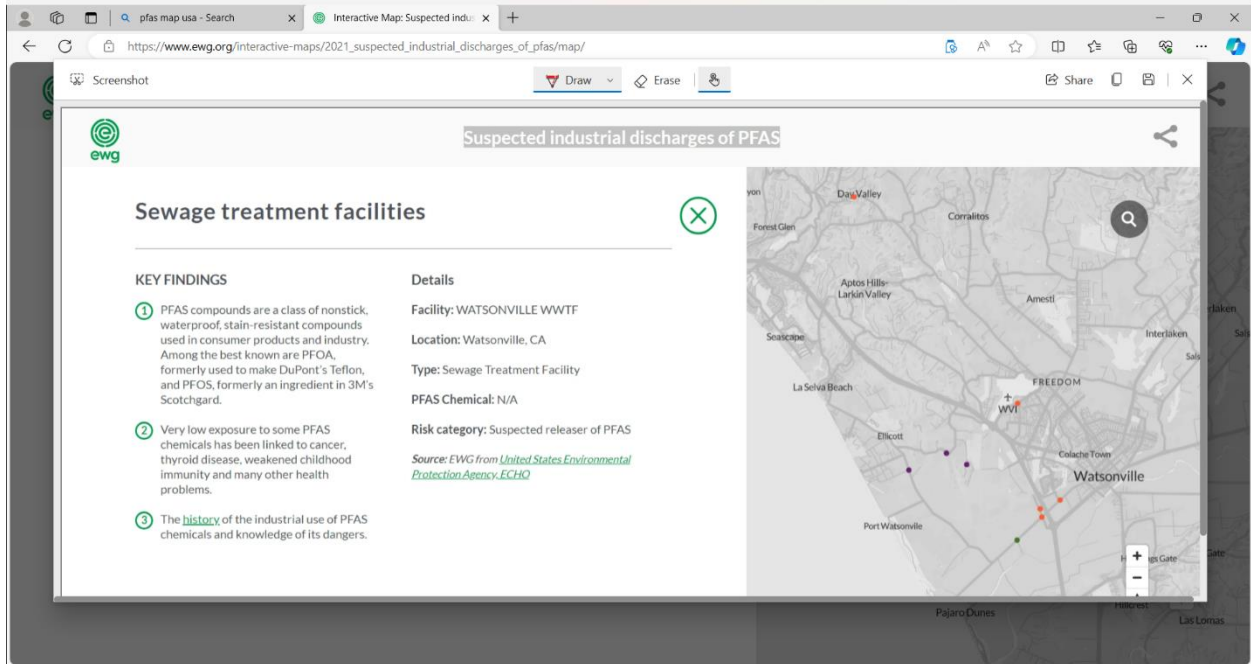
Interactive Map: Suspected industrial discharges of PFAS

This map shows the locations of 41,828 industrial and municipal sites that are known to produce or use, are suspected of using, or are a suspected source of the toxic fluorinated chemicals known as PFAS. The sites were identified through the Environmental Protection Agency's Chemical Data Reporting Rule database, the EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online database and Federal Aviation Administration data, plus a survey by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. Locations marked on the map are approximate and were identified using the addresses listed in the data sources, which may contain errors. This map does not purport to show sites of known PFAS discharges but rather sites known or suspected of making, using or releasing PFAS.

[Interactive Map: Suspected industrial discharges of PFAS \(ewg.org\)](https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/2021_suspected_industrial_discharges_of_pfas/map/)



Watsonville Sewage Treatment Facility



News Articles on sewage treatment facilities

Texas farmers claim company sold them PFAS-contaminated sludge that killed livestock.

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/texas-farmers-claim-company-sold-them-pfas-contaminated-sludge-that-killed-livestock/ar-BB1ja5H4?ocid=superappdhp&muid=AC32DBEE21E74DCC8CB5A9493AE1AC15&adid=&anid=D6861E922D7CF5EA9AFBCEAAFFFAFFFAFF&market=en-us&cm=en-us&activityId=&bridgeVersionInt=79&fontSize=sa_fontSize&isChinaBuild=sa_isChinaBuild

Officials call for action against carcinogenic farming sludge.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control examined bodies of water for three years and revealed two-thirds of tests contained "one or both of the most common types of forever chemicals, PFOA and PFOS, at levels above a proposed federal standard," The State [reported](#), noting 350 public wells and 18 surface water intake pipes were within a couple of miles of sludge sites.

https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/other/officials-call-for-action-against-carcinogenic-farming-sludge-it-s-dangerous-that-we-re-not-taking-this-more-seriously/ar-BB1iNiLY?ocid=superappdhp&muid=AC32DBEE21E74DCC8CB5A9493AE1AC15&adid=&anid=D6861E922D7CF5EA9AFBCEAAFFFAFFFAFF&market=en-us&cm=en-us&activityId=&bridgeVersionInt=79&fontSize=sa_fontSize&isChinaBuild=sa_isChinaBuild

When the proponents of an initiative measure submit a petition to the County Elections Official stating their intention to circulate and gather signatures to qualify a measure on the ballot for the next election, the California Elections Code requires the County Counsel to prepare an impartial title and summary of that measure. The County Counsel makes no conclusion in this summary about the accuracy of any representations in the measure, nor the legality of its provisions, if enacted. Nor does the County Counsel take a position on this proposed measure.

AN INITIATIVE MEASURE TO BE SUBMITTED DIRECTLY TO THE VOTERS

The County Counsel has prepared the following title and summary of the chief purpose and points of the proposed measure:

SAFE DRINKING WATER, CLEAN BEACHES, WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION, AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION INITIATIVE

The stated purpose of this proposed initiative measure is to safeguard water quality, preserve clean ocean and beach areas, reduce wildfire risks, protect forests, enhance wildlife habitats, and improve community spaces. These efforts would be funded by a special parcel tax of \$87 per year, with certain parcels exempt as set forth in the initiative. The collected funds would be distributed to local government agencies and other entities identified in the initiative and would be spent on eligible projects as outlined below.

If the initiative is approved by a majority of voters in the County, Chapter 4.65 will be added to the Santa Cruz County Code. Proposed Chapter 4.65 is set forth in full in the initiative. The proposed chapter contains separate sections for definitions, imposition of the special parcel tax, fund creation, an expenditure plan, implementation, and oversight and accountability, among others.

The initiative places responsibility on the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to distribute the funds collected by the special parcel tax. Forty percent of the available funds will be distributed to eligible applicants for eligible projects through a grant program administered by the County of Santa Cruz. Twenty percent of the available funds will be distributed to incorporated cities within the county for eligible projects. Twenty percent of the available funds will be distributed to the County of Santa Cruz for eligible projects. Finally, twenty percent of the available funds will be distributed to the Resource Conservation District and a local land stewardship implementation partner for completion of eligible projects on private lands that result in a public benefit.

Eligible projects include those focusing on water conservation, water quality, flood protection and restoration, protection of public access to beaches, wildlife protection, pollution reduction, development of shaded fuel breaks and reduction of hazardous fuels, forest management, wetlands restoration, trail development, park improvements, recreation programs, climate risk-reduction, and other projects identified in more detail in the initiative. Sections of the proposed code chapter establish a basis for prioritizing among eligible projects.

The initiative creates a Citizens Oversight Advisory Board that will conduct hearings and receive public input on allocations related to expenditures under the initiative, receive reports from local agencies on projects funded through the initiative, and approve a five-year vision plan to help identify and prioritize fund expenditures.

The special parcel tax approved under this initiative will be in place until ended by voters.

As submitted, this measure includes over sixteen pages of single-spaced text. Voters are referred to the initiative documents for complete details.

The People of the County of Santa Cruz ordain as follows:

Section 1. Title.

This Act shall be known and may be cited as the “Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act.”

Section 2. Findings and Declarations.

WHEREAS, protecting water quality and local drinking water sources for Santa Cruz County residents is of immense importance.

WHEREAS, nearly 100% of Santa Cruz County’s drinking water comes from local streams and groundwater aquifers fed by rainfall.

WHEREAS, drought, over-drafted groundwater basins, depleted streams, and degraded riparian habitats threaten Santa Cruz County’s water supply and water quality.

WHEREAS, sustaining water quality, reliability of water sources, and ecological function of Santa Cruz County’s watersheds will require sustained support for water resource management and stewardship.

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County’s beaches, coast, and marine life are uniquely important, and must be protected from pollution.

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County experienced several atmospheric river events in 2022 and 2023, causing widespread flooding and damaging roads, homes, stream channels, storm drains, levees, and other important surface and stormwater infrastructure.

WHEREAS, the breach of the Pajaro River levees in early 2023 resulted in major evacuations and flooding that devastated and disproportionately impacted low-income communities. Funding is necessary to not only repair damages, but also to protect Santa Cruz County’s drinking water resources from pollutants.

WHEREAS, the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire was the most destructive wildfire in Santa Cruz County in over a century and caused extensive physical and financial damage to the County’s communities, water resources, and natural resources, destroyed over 900 homes in the County, and caused an estimated \$340 million in total damage. With such extensive damage, recovery and rebuilding efforts are still underway three years later.

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County is prone to periodic large wildfire events and the resulting damage to infrastructure, the environment, water resources, and communities can be costly and difficult to fully recover from.

WHEREAS, preserving and enhancing Santa Cruz County’s forests and grasslands naturally removes carbon dioxide from the air.

WHEREAS, preventing catastrophic wildfires in Santa Cruz County will require sustained support for land stewardship and vegetation management practices.

WHEREAS, scenic beaches, lush forests, and rich farmland contribute to Santa Cruz County's local economy through industry and tourism.

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County is home to numerous species of special concern and sensitive habitat types.

WHEREAS, working lands, including farms, rangeland, and sustainable forestry, are vital to the Santa Cruz County community and economy and can function in complementary ways to improve water quality, reduce wildfire risk, sequester carbon dioxide, conserve natural lands, parks, and wildlife, and provide other critical public benefits.

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County, its cities, and local nonprofit organizations have received funding from state, federal, and local sources to acquire and protect open space and natural resources and further funding is needed to steward and manage these lands effectively to build resilience.

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience works to build community resilience and assist with response and recovery efforts from major flooding, wildfire, extreme weather, and other natural disaster events.

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz County Department of Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services and other local Parks Departments provide regional and neighborhood parks, coastal access, trails, and cultural and recreation programs and opportunities.

WHEREAS, the majority of Santa Cruz County voters perceive the need for additional funds to maintain local water resources, wildfire resilience, wildlife habitat, parks, beaches, and natural areas.

WHEREAS, changes in temperature and precipitation patterns are expected to amplify climate hazards in Santa Cruz County like extreme heat, drought, wildfire, landslides, flooding, sea-level rise, and worsened air quality, which threaten local water resources and increase wildfire risk.

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County remains one of the only counties in the greater Bay Area without a dedicated, sustainable source of ongoing local public funding for natural resources management and stewardship activities.

Section 3. Statement of Purpose.

It is the purpose and intent of the people of the County of Santa Cruz to enact a parcel tax to protect local drinking water sources including lakes, rivers, creeks, and streams; reduce wildfire risks; protect and enhance marine life, beaches, coastal habitats, wetlands, redwoods, parks and

publicly accessible natural areas, and other native wildlife and habitats; and preserve working lands and local agriculture.

Section 4. Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act.

Chapter 4.65 is added to Title 4 of the Code of the County of Santa Cruz, to read as follows:

Chapter 4.65 – Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act

4.65.010 Definitions.

(A) “Act” means the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act.

(B) “Administrative Costs” means those costs not directly associated with planning, development, management, and implementation of Eligible Projects intended to implement the goals of the Act. The activities of the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board are not administrative costs.

(C) “Advisory Board” means the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board established in section 4.65.060.

(D) “Agricultural Land Use” means Parcels that are zoned Commercial Agriculture (CA) or Timber Production (TP).

(E) “Board” means the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

(F) “Community Development” means the feasibility, planning, design, permitting, and construction of recreational infrastructure and amenities.

(G) “County” means the County of Santa Cruz.

(H) “Department” means the Santa Cruz County Department of Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services.

(I) “Disadvantaged Community” means either of the following two definitions. If either method of definition referred to in subsections (1) or (2) is eliminated, or becomes obsolete, modifications to this definition may be made by the Board of Supervisors, upon recommendation by the Advisory Board.

(1) A census tract that ranks within the top forty percent (40%) highest scoring census tracts in the County as identified in the current State's CalEnviroScreen, or

(2) A census tract identified as disadvantaged in the United States Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

(J) “Eligible Applicant” means Public Agencies as defined, Nonprofit Organizations as defined, and tribes.

(K) “Eligible Project” means a project intended to implement the goals of the Act and which meets the requirements of the Act, and includes pre-project assistance and feasibility, planning, acquisition, construction, development, improvement, restoration, rehabilitation, maintenance, stewardship, or any combination thereof.

(L) “Fund” means the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Fund.

(M) “Nonprofit Organization” means any charitable organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

(N) “Office” means the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience.

(O) “Parcel” means a lot, unit, or plot of real property having identified boundaries and an identified owner and that is documented for property tax purposes and given an assessor’s parcel number by the Assessor of the County of Santa Cruz, excluding those designated as Agricultural Land Use and Public Agency.

(P) “Property Tax Collection Fee” means an administrative fee of one percent (1%) of the funds collected through the Special Parcel Tax to provide for billing, collecting, apportioning, and reporting the Special Parcel Tax charges on the property tax roll.

(Q) “Public Agency” means any city, county, district, other local authority, or public body of or within the State.

(R) “Special Parcel Tax” means the tax imposed by section 4.65.020.

(S) “State” means the State of California.

(T) “Treasurer” means the Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector of the County.

(U) “Working Lands” means areas that are utilized for timber production, grazed grassland or rangeland, or cultivation of crops that benefit the broader public for economic or humanitarian purposes beyond individual use.

4.65.020 Imposition of Special Parcel Tax.

(A) Commencing with Fiscal Year 2025-26, an annual Special Parcel Tax in the amount of eighty-seven dollars (\$87) is hereby imposed on each Parcel located within the County.

(B) The Special Parcel Tax is levied on each Parcel as of January 1 of each year and shall be levied on the owner who owned the Parcel on that date unless the Parcel is excluded from taxation.

(C) The Special Parcel Tax shall be collected at the same time and in the same manner as ad valorem property taxes.

(D) All laws, regulations, and procedures regarding exemptions, due dates, installment payments, corrections, appeals, refunds, late payments, liens, and collections for secured roll ad valorem property taxes in the County shall be applicable to the collection of the Special Parcel Tax.

(E) Properties owned by a Public Agency or designated as Agricultural Land Use shall not be subject to the Special Parcel Tax.

4.65.030 Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Fund.

There is hereby established in the County Treasury a special fund entitled the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Fund. All revenues generated by the Special Parcel Tax, together with any interest and penalties thereon, shall be collected each fiscal year and deposited into the Fund. The Office and the Department, or a successor agency, may create any other funds, accounts, or subaccounts necessary or desirable for purposes of accounting for the monies in the Fund. Revenues in the Fund shall be used exclusively to carry out the purposes of this Act. Revenues in the Fund may also be used to enforce and administer the Special Parcel Tax, including to pay costs for submission of any measure to the voters for the establishment or alteration of the tax and to pay any costs associated with the collection of the tax.

4.65.040 Expenditure Plan.

(A) The Board shall distribute the proceeds in the Fund according to this section. The intended purpose of these expenditures is to confer the following benefits on the people of Santa Cruz County: water quality and protection including drought protection, drinking water quality, water supplies and availability, improvements to watersheds, and clean beaches and ocean; wildfire risk reduction including forest management, creation of defensible spaces, and fire resilience; wildlife and habitat protection including conservation of native biodiversity, restoring critical habitats and wildlife corridors, and stewarding natural and working lands; and safe recreation including developing, restoring, stewarding, or maintaining clean and safe parks, public access facilities, places to play, natural areas, trails, and other programmatic and recreational activities.

(B) The Board shall distribute the moneys in the Fund each fiscal year according to the following schedule, after withdrawing and allocating the Property Tax Collection Fee and Advisory Board costs authorized under the Act:

(1) Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Program.

(a) Forty percent (40%), on an annual basis, to Eligible Applicants for Eligible Projects in the county to be administered as a grant program by the Office and the

Department, or a successor agency named by the Board if the Office or the Department cease to exist. The Office and the Department shall jointly award monies from the Fund, through agreements and grants, providing for diversity in the types of projects awarded and the recipients of awards to support all geographic areas in the County.

(b) The Office and the Department shall make awards to Eligible Projects as defined in subdivision (K) of section 4.65.010 for activities which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Conservation of water supplies and groundwater recharge by enhancing watershed health, improved land management, and protecting land adjacent to County and city water sources.

(ii) Improving water quality through the control of soil erosion by restoring and repairing trails, culverts, drainage, water courses, floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas.

(iii) Natural or nature-based flood protection and restoration projects, including green infrastructure to reduce neighborhood flooding.

(iv) Protection of public access to local beaches and enhancement of visitor experiences by ensuring that public beaches are safe, clean, and accessible.

(v) Development and implementation of green infrastructure solutions that protect coastal areas and estuaries from erosion and the impacts of sea level rise.

(vi) Wildlife and marine-life protection and habitat improvement.

(vii) Pollution reduction projects, such as litter removal or urban forestry to reduce air pollution.

(viii) Development of shaded fuel breaks, defensible spaces, or the reduction of hazardous fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfire, especially along roadways, trails, and in the wildland-urban interface.

(ix) Forest management to lower dangerous fuel loads and mitigate conditions that could lead to catastrophic wildfires.

(x) Stewardship of private lands in the public benefit for fire resiliency, water quality, erosion control, or other ecosystem services.

(xi) Conservation of native biodiversity by reducing invasive species and protecting or restoring critical habitats and wildlife corridors.

(xii) Restoration of wetlands and the recovery of anadromous fish species.

(xiii) Creation of wildlife bridges, culverts, directional fencing, or other wildlife-friendly infrastructure.

(xiv) Trail development, staging areas, and other access facilities on lands open to the public.

(c) The Office and the Department shall prioritize awards for Eligible Projects that meet implementation priorities identified in subdivision (A) of section 4.65.050 or that address extreme weather, natural disasters, climate change impacts, water pollution, or saltwater intrusion impacts.

(d) An amount that equals not more than five percent (5%) of the funds allocated annually pursuant to paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040 may be used to pay the Administrative Costs associated with paragraph (a).

(e) Funds shall be deposited in a separate account, or accounts, to be overseen by the Office and the Department, or a successor agency, and expended pursuant to this section. Any funds unexpended at the close of each fiscal year shall remain in the account, or accounts, and expended pursuant to paragraph (a) of subsection (1) in the subsequent or future fiscal years. Funds may be accrued for expenditure in future years to enable sufficient funding for larger or long-term projects.

(2) Neighborhood Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Safe and Clean Parks Program.

(a) Twenty percent (20%), on an annual basis, to incorporated cities within the County for Eligible Projects conducted by the incorporated cities. The Board shall allocate funds to incorporated cities on a per capita basis. However, if any city does not achieve a minimum allocation of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) annually on a per capita basis, no less than two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) shall be made available to that city and the remainder shall be allocated on a per capita basis to the other cities meeting the minimum allocation.

(b) Each incorporated city shall use funds for Eligible Projects as defined in subdivision (K) of section 4.65.010 for activities which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Conservation of water supplies and groundwater recharge by enhancing watershed health, improved land management, and protecting land adjacent to city water sources.

- (ii) Improving water quality through the control of soil erosion by restoring and repairing trails, culverts, water courses, floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas.
- (iii) Natural or nature-based flood protection and restoration projects, including green infrastructure to reduce neighborhood flooding.
- (iv) Protection of public access to local beaches and enhancement of visitor experiences by ensuring that public beaches are safe, clean, and accessible.
- (v) Development and implementation of green infrastructure solutions that protect coastal areas and estuaries from erosion and the impacts of sea level rise.
- (vi) Pollution reduction projects, such as litter removal or urban forestry to reduce air pollution.
- (vii) Development of shaded fuel breaks, defensible spaces, or the reduction of hazardous fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfire, especially along roadways, trails, and in the wildland-urban interface.
- (viii) Forest management to lower dangerous fuel loads and mitigate conditions that could lead to catastrophic wildfires.
- (ix) Stewardship of private lands in the public benefit for fire resiliency, water quality, erosion control, or other ecosystem services.
- (x) Establishment, repair, construction, or maintenance of safe and clean parks.
- (xi) Establishment, repair, construction, or maintenance of river parkways and other trails, restrooms, picnic areas, and public recreation facilities.
- (xii) Park cleanliness, beautification, and litter removal.
- (xiii) Equitable access to nature through increased mobility and public transportation services to local parks.
- (xiv) After school and recreation programs, including sports and aquatic facilities, senior citizens programs, and high-quality environmental education and cultural programs.
- (xv) Visitor services for parks and open space preserves to protect natural resources, enhance visitor safety and enjoyment, and support volunteerism and environmental education.

(xvi) Support of activities conducted by a community conservation corps as certified pursuant to Public Resources Code section 14507.5.

(xvii) Trail development, staging areas, and other access facilities on lands open to the public.

(c) Priority shall be provided for Eligible Projects that meet implementation priorities identified in subdivision (A) of section 4.65.050 or that:

(i) Address extreme weather and natural disasters, climate change impacts, water pollution, or saltwater intrusion impacts, or

(ii) Meet the greatest need of communities lacking adequate access to parks and recreational facilities in the incorporated cities, or

(iii) Repair or enhance existing parks and recreational facilities.

(d) Funds shall be deposited in separate accounts to be overseen by the incorporated cities and expended pursuant to this section. Any funds unexpended at the close of each fiscal year shall remain in the accounts and be expended pursuant to this section in the subsequent or future fiscal years. Funds may be accrued for expenditure in future years to enable sufficient funding for larger or long-term projects.

(3) County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Safe and Clean Parks Program.

(a) Twenty percent (20%), on an annual basis, for Eligible Projects in the unincorporated parts of the County to the Office and the Department, or a successor agency named by the Board if the Office or the Department cease to exist. The Office and the Department shall jointly allocate funds to Eligible Projects.

(b) The County shall use funds for Eligible Projects as defined in subdivision (K) of section 4.65.010 for activities which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Conservation of water supplies and groundwater recharge by enhancing watershed health, improved land management, and protecting land adjacent to county water sources.

(ii) Improving water quality through the control of soil erosion by restoring and repairing trails, culverts, drainage, water courses, floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas.

- (iii) Natural or nature-based flood protection and restoration projects, including green infrastructure to reduce neighborhood flooding.
- (iv) Protection of public access to local beaches and enhancement of visitor experiences by ensuring that public beaches are safe, clean, and accessible.
- (v) Development and implementation of green infrastructure solutions that protect coastal areas and estuaries from erosion and the impacts of sea level rise.
- (vi) Pollution reduction projects, such as litter removal or urban forestry to reduce air pollution.
- (vii) Development of shaded fuel breaks, defensible spaces, or the reduction of hazardous fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfire, especially along roadways, trails, and in the wildland-urban interface.
- (viii) Forest management to lower dangerous fuel loads and mitigate conditions that could lead to catastrophic wildfires.
- (ix) Stewardship of private lands in the public benefit for fire resiliency, water quality, erosion control, or other ecosystem services.
- (x) Establishment, repair, construction, or maintenance of safe and clean parks.
- (xi) Establishment, repair, construction, or maintenance of river parkways and other trails, restrooms, picnic areas, and public recreation facilities.
- (xii) Park cleanliness, beautification, and litter removal.
- (xiii) Equitable access to nature through increased mobility and public transportation services to local parks.
- (xiv) After school and recreation programs, including sports and aquatic facilities, senior citizens programs, and high-quality environmental education and cultural programs.
- (xv) Visitor services for parks and open space preserves to protect natural resources, enhance visitor safety and enjoyment, and support volunteerism and environmental education.
- (xvi) Support of activities conducted by a community conservation corps as certified pursuant to Public Resources Code section 14507.5.

(xvii) Trail development, staging areas, and other access facilities on lands open to the public.

(c) Priority shall be provided for Eligible Projects that meet implementation priorities identified in subdivision (A) of section 4.65.050 or that:

(i) Address extreme weather and natural disasters, climate change impacts, water pollution, or saltwater intrusion impacts, or

(ii) Meet the greatest need of communities lacking adequate access to parks and recreational facilities in the county, or

(iii) Repair or enhance existing parks and recreational facilities.

(d) Funds shall be deposited in a separate account, or accounts, to be overseen by the Office and the Department, or a successor agency, and expended pursuant to this section. Any funds unexpended at the close of each fiscal year shall remain in the account, or accounts, and expended pursuant to this section in the subsequent or future fiscal years. Funds may be accrued for expenditure in future years to enable sufficient funding for larger or long-term projects.

(4) Water Quality, Ecosystem Protection, and Fire Resilience on Undeveloped and Working Lands Program.

(a) Twenty percent (20%), on an annual basis, for Eligible Projects in the County to be administered, or implemented, or both, by the entities identified in subdivision (D) of section 4.65.050. This program recognizes that a majority of lands in the County are in private ownership, and projects on these private lands to ameliorate flood risk, improve water quality, mitigate fire risk, or take similar actions for the public benefit are critical to steward natural resources to enhance resilience and reduce the overall risk of climate change and natural disasters.

(b) Funding allocated under paragraph (a) of subsection (4) shall be provided for Eligible Projects as defined in subdivision (K) of section 4.65.010 for activities which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(i) Agricultural protection and enhancement of ecosystem function, soil health, water quality, drought, or flood resilience on Working Lands.

(ii) Implementation of climate-risk reduction and resilience stewardship programs.

(iii) Technical assistance, education, and outreach for natural resources planning, stewardship, and restoration on private lands, including Working Lands and agricultural, rural residential, forest, and undeveloped land.

- (iv) Conservation of water supplies and groundwater recharge by enhancing watershed health and improved land management.
- (v) Improving water quality through the control of soil erosion by improving land and stormwater management, restoring and repairing trails, culverts, drainage, water courses, floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas.
- (vi) Natural or nature-based flood protection and restoration projects, including green infrastructure to reduce neighborhood flooding.
- (vii) Development and implementation of green infrastructure solutions that protect coastal areas and estuaries from erosion and the impacts of sea level rise.
- (viii) Development of shaded fuel breaks, defensible spaces, or the reduction of hazardous fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfire, especially along roadways, trails, and in the wildland-urban interface.
- (ix) Stewardship of private lands in the public benefit for fire resiliency, water quality, erosion control, or other ecosystem services.
- (x) Trail development, staging areas, and other access facilities on lands open to the public.
- (xi) Conservation of native biodiversity by reducing invasive species, improving habitat quality, and protecting or restoring wildlife corridors.
- (xii) Restoration of wetlands and the recovery of anadromous fish species.
- (xiii) Creation of wildlife bridges, culverts, directional fencing, or other wildlife-friendly infrastructure.

(c) Priority shall be provided for Eligible Projects that meet implementation priorities identified in subdivision (A) of section 4.65.050 or that:

- (i) Address extreme weather and natural disasters, climate change impacts, water pollution, or saltwater intrusion impacts, or
- (ii) Create habitat or green infrastructure buffers on lands impacted from climate change or natural disasters, or
- (iii) Meet current State or federal climate planning best management practices.

(d) Funds shall be deposited in a separate account, or accounts, to be overseen by the entities identified in subdivision (D) of section 4.65.050 and expended pursuant to this section. Any funds unexpended at the close of each fiscal year shall remain in the account, or accounts, and expended pursuant to this section in the subsequent or future fiscal years. Funds may be accrued for expenditure in future years to enable sufficient funding for larger or long-term projects.

4.65.050 Implementation.

(A) To the extent feasible, priority shall be given to Eligible Projects that do at least one of the following:

- (1) Serve as a local source of match funding that makes eligible or makes more competitive grant applications to other public or private sources.
- (2) Support multiple benefits that maximize climate resiliency and adaptation, including water conservation, air quality improvements, climate pollution reductions, habitat protection, and public health improvements.
- (3) Invest resources for stewardship, development, restoration, Community Development, and other improvements in Disadvantaged Communities for flood protection, drought protection, improved water quality, groundwater supplies, improved public access to resources, or recreation, including improvements to lakes, rivers, creeks, beaches, ocean, wetlands, and the coast.

(B) Recognizing the acute need to improve forest health and reduce fire risk in the forested northern area of the County, no less than six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000), on an annual basis, shall be made available from subsection (1) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040 for Eligible Projects on the property protected by the largest conservation easement in the County. Funds shall be used for Eligible Projects that benefit the public, for activities that include, but are not limited to, enhancing forest health, increasing fire resilience, providing public access or recreational values, preserving clean water, conserving natural resources, or restoring natural habitats.

(C) Recognizing the acute need to improve watershed function and reduce flooding risk in the southern area of the County, no less than six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000), on an annual basis, shall be made available from subsection (1) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040 for Eligible Projects that benefit the residents of the Pajaro Valley, as defined by geography that includes the City of Watsonville, the census defined urban area that borders the City of Watsonville, and areas within a mile of the following water bodies: the Watsonville Slough system, Pinto Lake, and the Pajaro River and its tributaries in Santa Cruz County. Funds shall be used for Eligible Projects that benefit the public, for activities that include, but are not limited to, improving watershed health, reducing risk of flooding, providing public access or recreational values, improving water quality, conserving natural resources, and restoring natural habitats. Consistent with this purpose, funds shall be awarded to between one and three Eligible Applicants, whether Nonprofit Organization or Public Agency.

(D) Projects funded pursuant to subsection (4) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040 shall be implemented by the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County and a land stewardship implementation partner. Funds shall be allocated evenly between the two entities. If deemed appropriate and in furtherance of the public benefits of the Act, the land stewardship implementation partner may elect to work with a special district to administer their allocation of funds. The land stewardship implementation partner shall be selected based on criteria as described in paragraph (h) of subsection (3) of subdivision (A) of section 4.65.060.

(E) The Treasurer shall deduct a Property Tax Collection Fee of no more than one percent (1%) annually that shall be deducted from the Fund before allocating the remaining proceeds pursuant to section 4.65.040.

(F) Funds allocated pursuant to this Act shall be used to increase and enhance activities described within the Act. Funds shall not supplant expenditures from other federal, state, or local sources or funds independently generated by the County, incorporated cities, or grant awardees.

4.65.060 Oversight and Accountability.

(A) The Board shall establish a Citizens Oversight Advisory Board.

(1) The Advisory Board shall be composed of nine (9) members, five (5) appointed by the Board with one selection from each of the five (5) Board supervisorial districts, and four (4) appointed with one selection from each incorporated city.

(2) The Advisory Board members shall not hold any elected office and shall have demonstrated expertise in the following areas:

(a) Water quality, water supply, or flood protection management.

(b) Wildfire or forest management.

(c) Wildlife, parks, or natural resources stewardship.

(d) Working Lands or agricultural expertise.

(e) Environmental justice, park equity, or public health.

(f) Knowledge and expertise in evaluating financial transactions or program cost-effectiveness.

(3) The Advisory Board shall do all of the following:

(a) Conduct hearings and receive public input on allocations related to this Act.

- (b) Receive reports annually from the County on projects funded pursuant to subsections (1) and (3) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040.
- (c) Receive reports annually from each of the incorporated cities on projects funded pursuant to subsection (2) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040.
- (d) Receive reports annually from the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County and the land stewardship implementation partner on projects funded pursuant to subsection (4) of subdivision (B) of section 4.65.040.
- (e) Report to the Board annually on the outcomes of the projects and programs funded through the Act as well as how the Act was used to leverage other public and private funds. Annual reports by the Advisory Board may also provide suggested direction on the types of projects to prioritize in the coming year.
- (f) Approve a five-year vision plan to support grant criteria and awards.
 - (i) The plan shall be published by July 1, 2025, and updated every five years thereafter.
 - (ii) The Advisory Board may provide recommendations on the development of the plan by the Office and the Department. The Office and the Department shall also consult the incorporated cities, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, and the land stewardship implementation partner in the development of the plan.
 - (iii) The vision plan shall identify the activities and geographies prioritized for investment throughout the County in a concise format primarily based on content derived from existing plans, such as, but not limited to, the Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy, Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan, Santa Cruz County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, California Water Plan, California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, California Outdoors for All Strategy, California Pathways to 30x30 Strategy, California Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy, Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, city climate adaptation plans, city parks and open space plans, or similar County, State, or local plans.
- (g) Select the land stewardship implementation partner by July 1, 2025, who shall serve in this role for a period of five years. After this initial period, the Advisory Board shall renew the land stewardship implementation partner or select another partner.
- (h) Utilize the following criteria for selecting the land stewardship implementation partner:

(i) The land stewardship implementation partner shall have a mission generally consistent with the purposes of the Act and the capacity and expertise to implement projects in the public benefit related to land, habitat, ecosystem, and natural resources management and protection.

(ii) The land stewardship implementation partner shall be a Nonprofit Organization as defined in subdivision (M) of section 4.65.010 that owns and stewards private lands on which Eligible Projects in the public benefit can be implemented.

(iii) The land stewardship implementation partner must be headquartered in Santa Cruz County with at least 10 years of experience working primarily in Santa Cruz County.

(iv) The land stewardship implementation partner must be able to submit annual reports to the Advisory Board and contribute to the development of the five-year vision plan.

(4) Members of the Advisory Board shall serve a term of four years at the pleasure of the Board or appointing city, and no member may serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. The Board, or appointing city, may, by order, extend this length of service or waive this limit for individuals that they appointed. A member's position shall become vacant upon their death, resignation, or removal by the Board or appointing city. In the case of such a vacancy, the Board or appointing city shall appoint a successor to fill the unexpired term.

(5) Costs associated with the Advisory Board shall be paid by revenues from the Special Parcel Tax. Reasonably budgeted amounts to pay for the Advisory Board shall be taken from the Fund and deposited in a separate account before monies from the Fund are distributed to the programs outlined in Section 4.65.040. These funds shall be overseen by the Office and the Department, or a successor agency, in their role as staff support to the Advisory Board.

(6) The Office and the Department, or a successor agency, shall staff the Advisory Board, which shall comply with the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act, codified at California Government Code Section 54950 et seq.

(7) Each member of the Advisory Board shall receive a stipend as compensation for their public service in an amount as determined by the Board annually by resolution.

4.65.070 Property Acquisition.

All real property acquired pursuant to this Act shall be acquired in compliance with Chapter 16 (commencing with section 7260) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the California Government Code.

4.65.080 Sunset Date.

The Special Parcel Tax levied pursuant to this Act shall be levied until ended by voters.

4.65.090 Severability.

If any provision of this Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect any other provisions or applications. To that end, the provisions of this Act are declared to be severable. It is the intent of the voters that this Act would have been enacted regardless of whether any invalid provision had been included or any invalid application had been made.

4.65.100 Amendment.

Except for amendments that would change the amount of the Special Parcel Tax imposed by this Act, change the authorized uses of revenue generated by the Special Parcel Tax, change the administering agency for reasons other than failure of performance, or extend the period for which the Special Parcel Tax may be imposed, the Board of Supervisors may amend this Act without submitting the amendment to the voters for approval, provided that the amendment is consistent with and furthers the purposes of this Act as enacted by the voters.

4.65.110 Implementation Date.

This Act shall take effect ten (10) days after the election at which it is adopted as certified by the Santa Cruz County Clerk (Elections Department) and reported to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act

The Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act is a proposed ballot initiative sponsored by environmental and community organizations to address critical environmental and climate resilience concerns in Santa Cruz County. It focuses on water quality protection, wildfire risk reduction, the health of Monterey Bay and our beaches, forest preservation, wildlife habitat enhancement, and the improvement of community spaces.

What will this measure fund?

This measure will establish the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act to manage and maintain the County's natural resources for the benefit of people, wildlife, and the natural environment. This measure will fund activities that:

- Protect groundwater, drinking water sources, and other natural water sources now and for future generations, including local creeks, streams, and rivers.
- Preserve and protect the health of Monterey Bay and our beaches by addressing pollution.
- Reduce the risk of dangerous and damaging wildfires.
- Protect redwood trees and local forests.
- Restore wildlife habitats and protect endangered native species, marine life, and wetlands.
- Care for and maintain natural areas, open spaces, and parks.

Safeguarding water quality & cleaning oceans and beaches

What is the water crisis in Santa Cruz County and how will this measure help?

Santa Cruz County faces ongoing water shortages and drought-related challenges exacerbated by climate change. The County's water supply is derived almost entirely from local rivers, reservoirs, and groundwater sources and many of our major groundwater basins are overused and depleted. Major climate change events like drought and intensified storms make water sources less reliable and water storage more difficult. This measure will enable the County, incorporated cities, nonprofits, and water agencies to invest in critical projects that protect these water sources from pollution and contamination and enhance the natural areas around them.

How does taking care of our lands help to improve water quality and supply?

Land conservation and management plays a pivotal role in water quality and supply by protecting watersheds, maintaining important elements of the water cycle like groundwater

recharge, and minimizing the accumulation and runoff of pollutants. Land management practices in forests and wetlands support watershed health by reducing erosion, preserving natural flow patterns, and minimizing flooding. By maintaining these natural areas, we can protect critical water sources now and for future generations and make Santa Cruz County's water supply more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.

Reducing wildfire risks & preserving forests

How will this measure help reduce fire risk in Santa Cruz County?

This measure will provide much-needed local funds for forest health and wildfire risk reduction activities such as reducing dangerous fuel loads, managing vegetation, and creating defensible space. These activities will reduce wildfire risks in forests and open spaces and help protect surrounding communities. Funds for wildfire resilience and forest health projects will also be used to apply for larger state and federal grant programs that require local match funds.

What strategies help with wildfire prevention in our forests and protected lands?

Regular brush clearing of dead trees and brush is essential to prevent the worst wildfires. Controlled burns, also known as prescribed fires, reduce underbrush, dead trees, and forest debris. Reducing the amount of available fuel makes wildfires less intense and easier to control. Creating firebreaks and defensible space are other high-value fire resilience strategies. Our local forest and natural resources agencies do a tremendous job with this labor-intensive work, but they lack sufficient local funding for these essential activities. This measure will invest in these critical activities to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in Santa Cruz County.

Wildlife protection & recreational areas

How will the measure help endangered species and wildlife in Santa Cruz County?

Santa Cruz County's most cherished places, like our beaches, forests, and wetlands, are also where much of our wildlife lives. Important and threatened species like sea otters and redwood trees rely on healthy ecosystems. The measure will provide funding for projects that restore habitat and protect wildlife corridors in Santa Cruz County. Investing in the restoration of habitat will enhance biodiversity and provide healthy environments for people and wildlife.

How will the measure benefit parks and recreational areas in Santa Cruz County?

Some of the funds from the measure will be distributed to the county and city parks districts to support parks and recreation projects and programs. Parks and community spaces across the county will benefit from increased maintenance, new amenities, and additional funding to clean up trash and improve public safety. The measure prioritizes communities that do not have as much access to existing parks and community spaces.

Oversight & accountability

How is the Act funded?

Revenue would be generated by a modest \$87 per parcel tax. By coming together as a community, we could raise approximately \$7.5 million annually in locally-controlled funding.

How can I be sure funds from a potential measure would be spent as promised?

This measure includes strict fiscal accountability provisions through a special account separate from the county's general fund. All funds would be locally controlled and could not be taken by the state or used for other purposes. Additionally, the measure sets up annual audits and public financial disclosures.

Who is responsible for overseeing the initiatives outlined in this measure?

A Citizens Oversight Advisory Board will oversee the allocation of funds and ensure funds are used for purposes consistent with the measure. Advisory Board members will come from all areas of the county and have expertise in areas like flood protection, forest management, wildlife and natural resources, agriculture, and financial management. This Board will produce an annual report on use of funds available to all members of the public.

What is required for this Act to pass, and by when?

This Act is proposed by voter initiative, which requires a 50% plus one voter approval to pass. It will be on the ballot in the November 2024 general election.

Who supports the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act?

A list of endorsements from key leaders, organizations, and community members will be available on the website soon.

What if I have more questions?

Please reach out to team@sccforwaterandwildfireprotection.org and we will respond as soon as we can!



MONARCHS AT NATURAL BRIDGES

LAGUNA CREEK BEACH



REDWOODS ABOVE CORRALITOS

PAJARO RIVER ESTUARY



WATER & WILDFIRE PROTECTION ACT

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RESIDENTS FOR CLEAN WATER, FIRE SAFETY, AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE
SPONSORED BY ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



Our Santa Cruz County. Our values.

We live in an incredible place: Beaches, forests, farms, and parklands give us food to eat, places to recreate, and contribute to our shared identity.

But lands and waters are under siege: Drought, extreme wildfires, pollution, and stronger winter storms are hurting the Santa Cruz County we love.

To stave off these threats: We must improve the stewardship of our natural resources, which is critically underinvested in Santa Cruz County.



Source: Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (2022)

Rising challenges...



Over just the past five years, natural disasters have pummeled Santa Cruz County. Due to archaic state tax laws, our County gets far fewer tax dollars per capita compared to neighboring counties. We are recovering from **wildfire, floods, and coastal erosion** with far less funding than is adequate to protect our communities and natural resources.

We need a proactive investment in land and water resource stewardship to prepare for the future.

So, what can we do?

We know the problem. Without increased investment and a dedicated source of funding to steward our waters, forests, parks, and working lands, our County will be unprepared for future challenges.

The County can raise locally-controlled money and create a sustainable and protected fund that takes care of our natural resources and our communities.



**RESTORATION NEAR HARKINS
SLOUGH IN WATSONVILLE**

**NATURAL RESOURCES SURVEY
NEAR SCOTTS VALLEY**



HEALTHY LANDS & HEALTHY ECONOMIES:

NATURE'S VALUE IN
SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY



RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

EARTH
ECONOMICS



Alnus Ecological

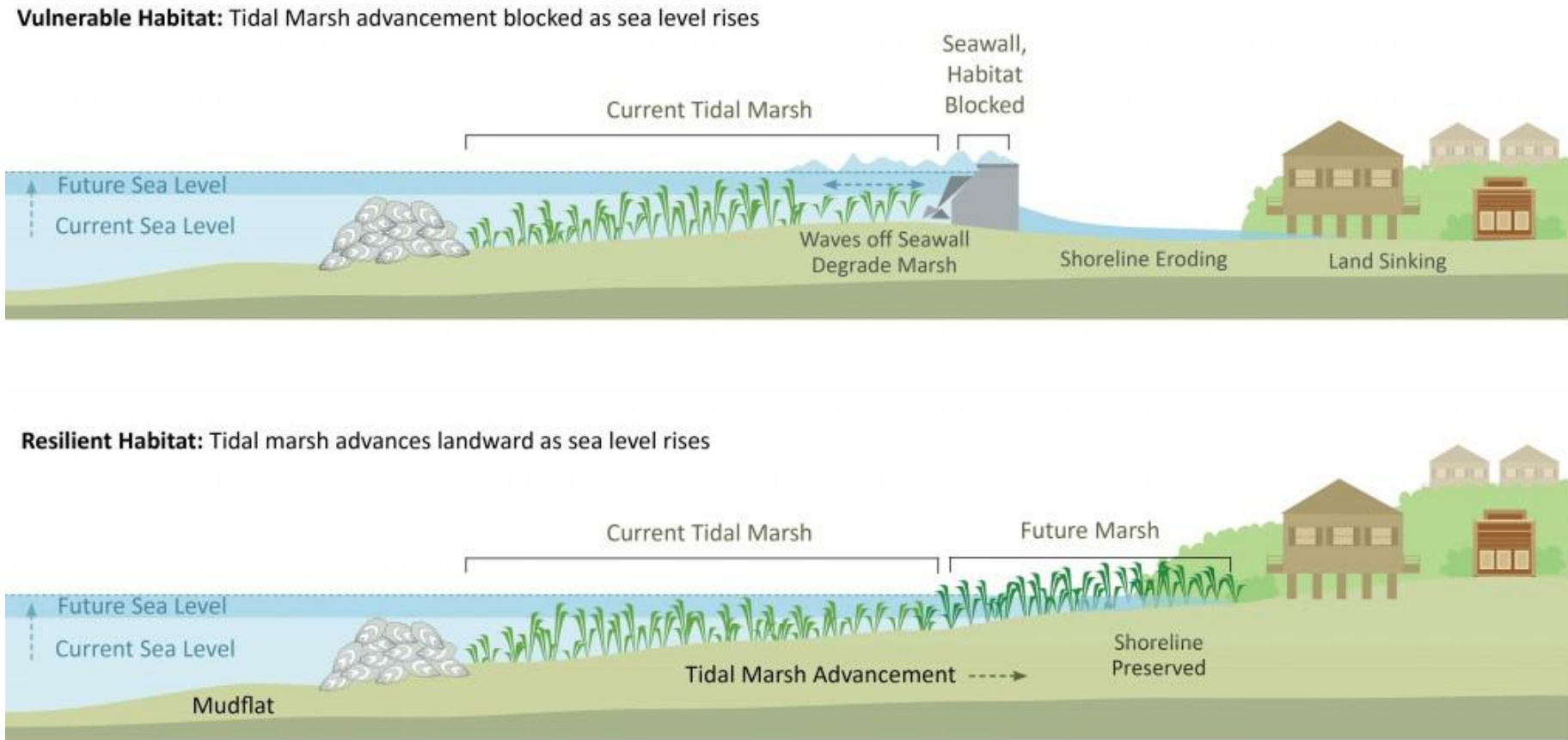
We know that investing in land stewardship pays dividends for our economy and the health of our human and natural communities

Looking to the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program as an ongoing example of this investment at work...

*Key resource issues and environmental threats that IWRP addresses in Santa Cruz County include: Fine sediment loading from outdated culverts and road crossings; loss of functioning and “linked” healthy wetlands; loss of terrestrial and aquatic habitat for amphibians; man-made fish passage barriers; and diminished lagoon habitat, function, and water quality ... **Between 2005 and 2012, RCDSCC was able to leverage its \$40-50K annual tax funding base (by several orders of magnitude) through partnership building and secure \$17.1 million in investments for IWRP projects from public and private sources outside of the County. Most of these funds would not have come into Santa Cruz County in absence of IWRP.***

Schmidt, R., Lozano, S., Robins, J., Schwartz, A., Batker, D., 2015. Nature's Value in Santa Cruz County. Earth Economics & the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (page 46)

Funds are available at state and federal level for **nature-based resiliency projects**. But many grants require local match. We know we can't raise the hundreds of millions necessary to meet the scope of the problems we face ourselves, but we can raise critical seed money!



© 2013 Copyright The Nature Conservancy

Data Source: <https://coastalresilience.org/project/future-habitat/>

The Water & Wildfire Protection Act:

Raises ~\$7.5M in annual funds

In a special account **separate from** the County's general fund. An \$87 parcel tax would be assessed annually on all parcels not publicly owned or zoned CA/TP.

Be accountable and transparent

A **Citizens Oversight Board** of experts from across the county will ensure that the funds are used as intended and provide annual reports accessible to the public.

Will help to fund projects that:

- Protect our **water sources, reduce pollution in Monterey Bay**, and improve coastal access
- Improve **forest health** and reduce the risk of destructive **wildfires**
- Restore habitats and wetlands that **store carbon and benefit wildlife**
- Maintain **parks, trails, and open spaces** so everyone has a safe and welcoming place to spend time outdoors

Will potentially appear on the **November 2024** election ballot for all Santa Cruz County registered voters

It does it by:

Investing in ourselves

Our county has proven leaders and organizations that are starved for funds and ready to do more.



If passed in November 2024, the measure would fund **in its first decade:**

- **\$29M for grants to community groups and public agencies** to fund stewardship and climate resilience projects - eligible for use as local match to state and federal grants.
- **\$29M to our 4 cities and unincorporated county** to invest in projects in their jurisdictions that take care of public lands, waters, natural resources, and parks.
- **\$14M to 2 partners** – the Resource Conservation District and another organization selected by the Oversight Board – to help private landowners proactively steward and increase the resilience of their lands to future natural disasters.

HOW THE PROPOSED ACT WORKS: FUNDING FLOWCHART

~\$7.5M in annual revenue raised →

Admin costs for County to administer

~\$7.125M in annual funds to disburse

40% (~\$2.9M) for water, fire resilience, land management, habitat, and parks projects awarded to nonprofits and public agencies via a **grant program**

\$1.2M reserved and split between 2 priority areas: forest health in North County and Pajaro Valley watershed improvements in South County

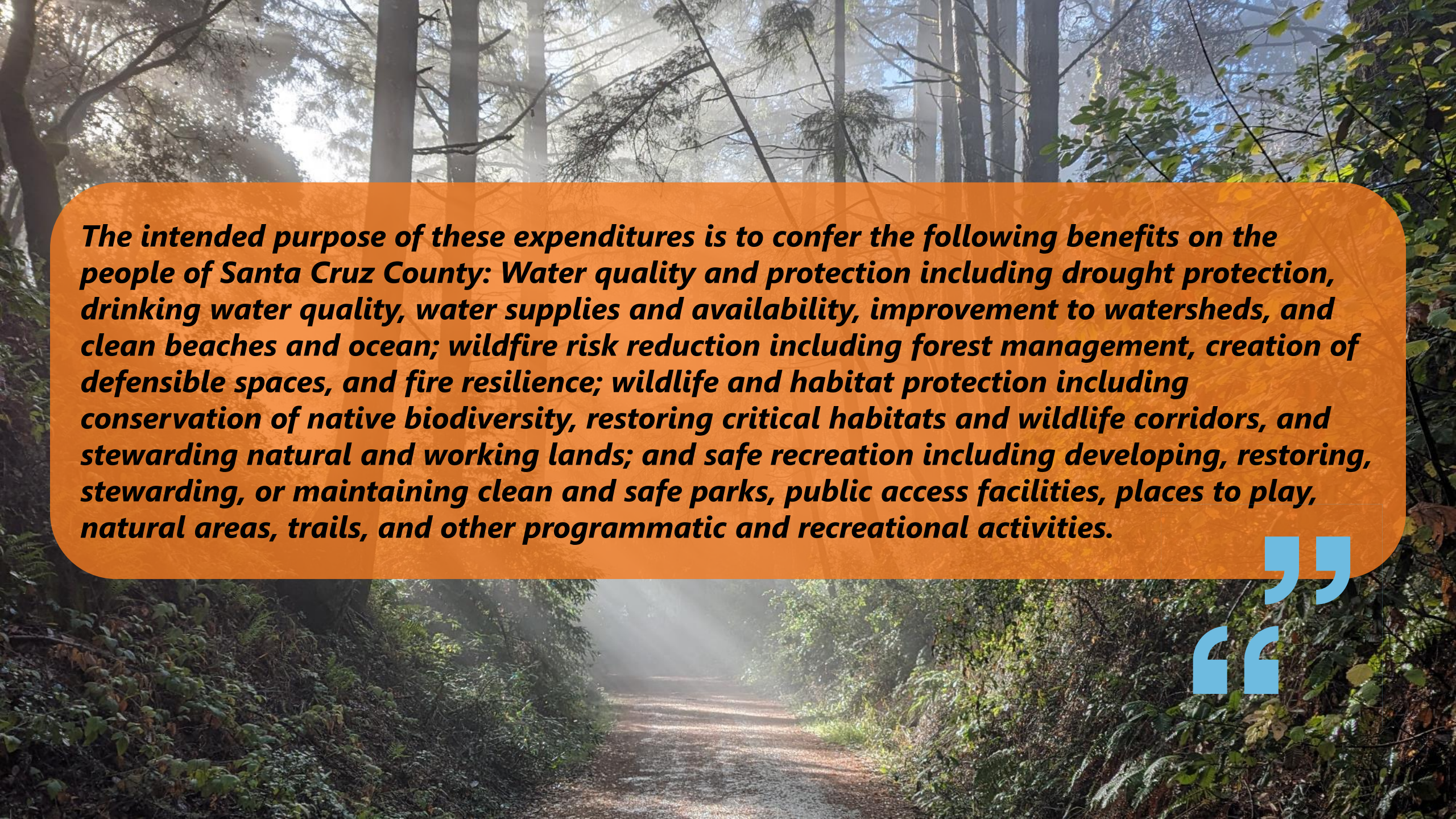
20% (~\$1.4M) for water, fire resilience, land management, habitat, and parks projects allocated to the **incorporated cities**

20% (~\$1.4M) for water, fire resilience, land management, habitat, and parks projects allocated to the **unincorporated County**

20% (~\$1.4M) for public benefit projects on private lands allocated to the **RCD of SCC** and a **designated land stewardship partner**

County Parks and OR3 recommend projects for BOS to authorize funding

Advisory board publishes annual report and 5-year vision plan; receives yearly reports from each entity to ensure use of funds is consistent with the goals of the Act



The intended purpose of these expenditures is to confer the following benefits on the people of Santa Cruz County: Water quality and protection including drought protection, drinking water quality, water supplies and availability, improvement to watersheds, and clean beaches and ocean; wildfire risk reduction including forest management, creation of defensible spaces, and fire resilience; wildlife and habitat protection including conservation of native biodiversity, restoring critical habitats and wildlife corridors, and stewarding natural and working lands; and safe recreation including developing, restoring, stewarding, or maintaining clean and safe parks, public access facilities, places to play, natural areas, trails, and other programmatic and recreational activities.



Grant structure:

Eligibility:

Local public agencies and nonprofits can apply for work in Santa Cruz County. Private landowners can apply for funds through a nonprofit partner like the RCD.

Selection:

County Parks and OR3 are named as co-administrators reviewing grant applications and selecting projects for funding. Awards subject to approval by County Supervisors.

Prioritization:

The initiative language prioritizes projects that:

- Serve as local **source of match** for larger grants
- Create **multi-benefit outcomes** for water resources, air quality, habitat restoration, or public health
- Benefit **disadvantaged communities** (defined using CalEnviroScreen and federal CEQ Screening tool)
- Mitigate impacts of **natural disasters**

Grant Amounts:

Grants per year are expected to total almost \$3M. Initiative does not require an award ceiling, but County may administer one.

Eligible types of projects:

Nature-based solutions to reduce flooding

Improvement of public access facilities

Wildlife corridor and connectivity

Wetland restoration

Litter removal and clean-ups

Forest health, shaded fuel breaks

Riparian habitat improvement

Invasive species management

... this list is not comprehensive! In general, any nature-based project enhancing lands and waters will be considered.

Did you know? Nearly 100% of Santa Cruz County's water for drinking, farming and wildlife comes from local watersheds as rain, groundwater, and recycled water.

Example Project: Improving water quality at county parks like Pinto Lake where algae blooms hurt the ecosystem and prevent safe use by people.

Example Project: Restoring native habitats along banks of local rivers to reduce erosion and silt in the watersheds that provide our drinking water.

This initiative funds projects that will restore watersheds



POND SURVEY DURING RAINY SEASON

This initiative funds projects to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire



CZU FIRE BURN SCAR ABOVE DAVENPORT



Learning from past decisions. After a century of fire suppression, there is a backlog of work to improve forest health.

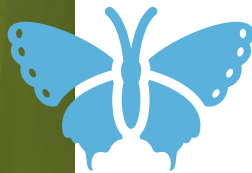
Example Project: Creating shaded fuel breaks to protect our communities most at risk of destructive fires.

Example Project: Granting funds to Tribal partners to reintroduce beneficial, low intensity fires on public lands.

This initiative funds projects to restore habitat for wildlife



PACIFIC CHORUS FROG IN SANTA CRUZ



Caring for our biodiversity hotspot: Santa Cruz County is host to many rare or keystone species, like redwoods and sea otters, that need our stewardship.

Example Project: Growing RCD capacity to restore natural habitats on private forests and rangelands with dedicated annual funding.

Example Project: Removing invasive species on public lands that damage native habitats and increase fire risks for communities.

Keeping our county clean.

Safe, clean, and inclusive, outdoor spaces is a benefit to all of us and strengthens our community's health.

Example Project:

Improving conditions of public facilities and amenities at county and city parks, especially in areas of under-investment.

Example Project:

Granting funds to nonprofit groups who are reducing plastic pollution at beaches, rivers, and sensitive habitat areas.

This initiative funds projects that clean up pollution and maintains natural areas



GROUP GETTING READY TO HIKE IN BONNY DOON



What's next

This initiative is supported by a campaign committee which is circulating signatures for the measure to appear on the November 2024 ballot. Go to:

www.SCCforWaterandWildfireProtection.org

To read the full text of the initiative, endorse, donate, or sign up for updates!

*Paid for by Santa Cruz County Residents for Clean Water, Fire Safety, and Climate Resilience
Sponsored by Environmental and Community Organizations*

Santa Cruz County Code Chapter 2.96

Sections:

2.96.010 Established—Statutory authority.

2.96.020 Membership.

2.96.030 Term of office.

2.96.040 Organization and procedures.

2.96.050 Subcommittees.

2.96.060 Powers and duties.

2.96.010 Established—Statutory authority.

The Water Advisory Commission is hereby established under the authority of Government Code Section [31000.1](#), in compliance with SCCC [2.38.060](#). [Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.010].

2.96.020 Membership.

The Commission shall consist of seven members, residents of Santa Cruz County, appointed by the Board of Supervisors:

- (A) Each Supervisor shall nominate one person ~~who may reside within the Supervisor's district~~ to serve on the Commission;
- (B) One representative of the public water purveyors with 200 or more connections in Santa Cruz County shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors on an at-large basis;
- (C) One representative of the private or mutual water companies with five to 199 connections in Santa Cruz County shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors on an at-large basis. [Ord. 5278 § 25, 2018; Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 3240 § 1, 1982; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.040].

2.96.030 Term of office.

Each member representing a supervisorial district shall serve for a term of four years, commencing on April 1st of the year in which the member's nominating Supervisor begins a full term. Each at-large member shall serve for a term of four years, staggered in accordance with SCCC [2.38.100\(A\)\(2\)](#), with such staggering determined by lot. [Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.050].

2.96.040 Organization and procedures.

(A) General Organization. The Commission shall comply in all respects with SCCC [2.38.110](#) through [2.38.250](#).

(B) Staff Support. The Environmental Health Services Division of the Health Services Agency shall provide staff support for the Commission. The Environmental Health Director, or their designated representative, shall serve as the Administrative Secretary to the Commission and shall receive copies of all minutes, reports and recommendations submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Commission.

(C) Other Services. Staff members from the ~~Planning Department, Public Works~~[Community Development and Infrastructure](#) Department, ~~the Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency,~~ and the County Counsel's Office shall provide services to the Commission and attend Commission meetings upon request. [Ord. 5278 § 25, 2018; Ord. 4692 § 1, 2002; Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.060].

~~2.96.050 Subcommittees.~~

~~The Board of Supervisors may establish by resolution, and in accordance with the provisions of SCCC [2.38.070](#), one or more subcommittees to report to the Water Advisory Commission and the Board of Supervisors on specific water policy concerns. The membership of any such subcommittee may include persons with specialized and professional knowledge in water policy matters, as the Board may direct. [Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.030].~~

2.96.~~060~~050 Powers and duties.

The Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

- (A) Advise the Board of Supervisors on all matters relating to water policy.
- (B) Recommend policies to the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the production of water and the development of additional water supplies are consistent with the growth management program and the General Plan of Santa Cruz County.
- (C) Recommend to the Board of Supervisors any policies necessary to protect surface water, groundwater, and recreational resources of Santa Cruz County.
- (D) Facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within Santa Cruz County.

(E) Provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.

(F) Undertake other duties relating to water resources, as requested by the Board of Supervisors.

~~The Commission shall advise the Board of Supervisors on all matters relating to water policy. The Commission shall also recommend policies to the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the production of water and the development of additional water supplies are consistent with the growth management program and the General Plan of Santa Cruz County. In addition, the Commission shall recommend to the Board of Supervisors any policies necessary to protect the watersheds, groundwater, fish and wildlife, and recreational resources of Santa Cruz County. The Commission shall also undertake other duties relating to water resources, as requested by the Board of Supervisors. [Ord. 5278 § 25, 2018; Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.020].~~

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- (C) One representative of the private or mutual water companies with five to 199 connections in Santa Cruz County shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors on an at-large basis. [Ord. 5278 § 25, 2018; Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 3240 § 1, 1982; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.040].

2.96.030 Term of office.

Each member representing a supervisorial district shall serve for a term of four years, commencing on April 1st of the year in which the member's nominating Supervisor begins a full term. Each at-large member shall serve for a term of four years, staggered in accordance with SCCC [2.38.100\(A\)\(2\)](#), with such staggering determined by lot. [Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.050].

2.96.040 Organization and procedures.

(A) General Organization. The Commission shall comply in all respects with SCCC [2.38.110](#) through [2.38.250](#).

(B) Staff Support. The Environmental Health Services Division of the Health Services Agency shall provide staff support for the Commission. The Environmental Health Director, or their designated representative, shall serve as the Administrative Secretary to the Commission and shall receive copies of all minutes, reports and recommendations submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Commission.

(C) Other Services. Staff members from the Community Development and Infrastructure Department, the Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency, and the County Counsel's Office shall provide services to the Commission and attend Commission meetings upon request. [Ord. 5278 § 25, 2018; Ord. 4692 § 1, 2002; Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.060].

2.96.050 Powers and duties.

The Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

- (A) Advise the Board of Supervisors on all matters relating to water policy.
- (B) Recommend policies to the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the production of water and the development of additional water supplies are consistent with the growth management program and the General Plan of Santa Cruz County.
- (C) Recommend to the Board of Supervisors any policies necessary to protect surface water, groundwater, and recreational resources of Santa Cruz County.
- (D) Facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within Santa Cruz County.
- (E) Provide opportunities for coordinating and communicating with the state and other local governments, community-based organizations, local water suppliers, and local residents on a regular basis and during drought or water shortage emergencies.
- (F) Undertake other duties relating to water resources, as requested by the Board of Supervisors.

[Ord. 5278 § 25, 2018; Ord. 3372 § 1, 1983; Ord. 2111, 1975; prior code § 3.19.020].

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - NAME

- A. NAME.** The name of this organization shall be the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission, hereinafter known as the "Commission".
- B. AUTHORITY.** The Commission is organized under the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors as authorized under Government Code Section 310000.1 and in compliance with Chapter 2.38 and Chapter 2.96 of the Santa Cruz County Code.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

The Commission Membership shall be consistent with Chapter 2.96 of the County code, consist of seven members, residents of Santa Cruz County, appointed by the Board of Supervisors:

- ~~**A. ALLOCATED POSITIONS.** Each Supervisor shall nominate one person who may reside within the Supervisor's district to serve on the Commission;~~
- ~~**B. AT-LARGE POSITIONS.** One representative of the public water purveyors shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors on an at-large basis; One representative of the private or mutual water companies in Santa Cruz County shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors on an at-large basis.~~
- ~~**C. TERMS.** Each member representing a supervisorial district shall serve for a term of four years, commencing on April 1st of the year in which the member's nominating Supervisor begins a full term. Each at-large member shall serve for a term of four years, staggered in accordance with subsection (A)(2) of Subdivision 2.38.100 of the Santa Cruz County Code, with such staggering determined by lot.~~

ARTICLE III - POWERS AND DUTIES

The Commission Powers and Duties shall be consistent with Chapter 2.96 of the County code:

~~The Commission shall advise the Board of Supervisors on all matters relating to water policy, and shall specifically advise the board on the formulation, review, updating and implementation of the County's water master plan. The Commission shall also recommend policies to the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the production of water and the development of additional water supplies are consistent with the growth management program and the General Plan of Santa Cruz County. In addition, the Commission shall recommend to the Board of Supervisors any policies necessary to protect the watersheds, groundwater, fish and game, and recreational resources of Santa Cruz County. The Commission shall also undertake other duties relating to water quality, as requested by the Board of Supervisors.~~

ARTICLE IV - ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES

- A. GENERAL ORGANIZATION.** The Commission shall comply in all respects with Subdivisions 2.38.110 through 2.38.250 of the Santa Cruz County Code.

B. REGULAR MEETINGS. The Commission meetings shall be held on a regular schedule as established in advance by the Commission. There will be a minimum of 4 quarterly regular scheduled business meetings per year.

C. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS. Meetings will be conducted with that degree of formality necessary to conduct orderly business. At the discretion of the Chair or request of any member, particular business will be conducted in accordance with ~~The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (Sturgis)~~Rosenberg's Rules of Order.

D. STAFF SUPPORT. ~~The Environmental Health Services Division of the Health Services Agency shall provide staff support for the Commission. The Environmental Health Director, or their designated representative, shall serve as the Administrative Secretary to the Commission and shall receive copies of all minutes, reports and recommendations submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Commission. County Public Works Department shall provide staff support for the Commission. The Public Works Director, or his designated representative, shall serve as the Administrative Secretary to the Commission and shall receive copies of all minutes, reports and recommendations submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Commission. Staff members from the Community Development and Infrastructure Department, the Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency, and the Planning Department, Environmental Health Services and the County Counsel's office shall provide services to the Commission, and shall attend Commission meetings upon request.~~

E. SUBCOMMITTEES. ~~The Board of Supervisors may establish by resolution, and in accordance with the provisions of Subdivision 2.38.070, one or more subcommittees to report to the Water Advisory Commission and the Board of Supervisors on specific water policy concerns. The membership of any such subcommittee may include persons with specialized and professional knowledge in water policy matters, as the Board may direct. Commission may appoint Subcommittees consistent with Santa Cruz County Code, Section 2.38.230 as follows:~~

~~(A) Sub-committees may be appointed, as needed, by the Chair with the majority approval of the Commission. The Chair, with the majority approval of the Commission, shall terminate each sub-committee when its function is no longer necessary.~~

~~(B) The Commission Chair shall report the name, purpose, and membership of each standing sub-committee established to assist the Commission for longer than six (6) months.~~

~~(C) Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the Chair.~~

~~(D) All sub-committees shall comply with the notice and agenda requirements otherwise applicable to the Commission in these by-laws, except for subcommittees composed solely of less than a quorum of the members of the Commission which are not standing sub-committees of the Commission with either a continuing subject jurisdiction or a meeting schedule fixed by resolution or other formal action of the Commission.~~

F. AGENDAS.

(A) 1.—Commissioners who wish to place an item on the agenda shall give that item to the staff of the Commission at least one week in advance of the meeting. If the agenda for the next meeting is already full, staff may suggest that the item be postponed to a later meeting.

(B) 2.—At least seventy-two (72) hours prior to each regular meeting, an agenda for the regular meeting shall be emailed to each Commission member, ~~and~~ to each representative of the news media, and to each other person who has submitted a written request to the Commission for notification of meetings, and shall be posted at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the regular meeting at a location that is freely accessible to the public, as well as posted to the Commission's website.

(C) 3.—The agenda shall ~~continue contain~~ a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting. No action or discussion shall be undertaken on any item not appearing on the posted agenda except that members of the Commission may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by persons exercising their public testimony rights or ask a question for clarification, refer the matter to staff or to other resources for factual information, or request staff to report back at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter. Notwithstanding the foregoing, action may be taken on an item of business not appearing on the posted agenda upon a determination by two-thirds vote of the membership of the Commission, or if less than two-thirds of the members are present, by unanimous vote of those members present, that there is a need to take immediate action and that the need for action came to the attention of the County subsequent to the agenda being posted.

(D) 4.—At least seventy-two (72) hours prior to each special meeting, an agenda for the special meeting shall be emailed to each Commission member, ~~and~~ to each representative of the news media, and to each other person who has submitted a written request to the Commission for notification of meetings; and shall be posted every seventy-two (72) hours prior to the special meeting at a location that is freely accessible to members of the public and posted on the Commission's website. No business other than that listed on the agenda will be considered at a special meeting.

(E) 5.—In addition, the agenda will provide for community oral communications on items not on the agenda, which are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission at the beginning of each regular meeting agenda.

ARTICLE V – BY-LAWS AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the By-Laws may be recommended by the vote of a majority of the Commissioners. Copies of any proposed amendment shall be provided to each member of the Commission not less than two weeks prior to the meeting at which a vote of said amendment is to be taken. Any amendment recommended by the Commission must then receive approval of the Board of Supervisors.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - NAME

- A. NAME.** The name of this organization shall be the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission, hereinafter known as the "Commission".
- B. AUTHORITY.** The Commission is organized under the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors as authorized under Government Code Section 310000.1 and in compliance with Chapter 2.38 and Chapter 2.96 of the Santa Cruz County Code.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

The Commission Membership shall be consistent with Chapter 2.96 of the County code.

ARTICLE III - POWERS AND DUTIES

The Commission Powers and Duties shall be consistent with Chapter 2.96 of the County code:

ARTICLE IV - ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES

- A. GENERAL ORGANIZATION.** The Commission shall comply in all respects with Subdivisions 2.38.110 through 2.38.250 of the Santa Cruz County Code.
- B. REGULAR MEETINGS.** The Commission meetings shall be held on a regular schedule as established in advance by the Commission. There will be a minimum of 4 quarterly regular scheduled business meetings per year.
- C. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS.** Meetings will be conducted with that degree of formality necessary to conduct orderly business. At the discretion of the Chair or request of any member, particular business will be conducted in accordance with *Rosenberg's Rules of Order*.
- D. STAFF SUPPORT.** The Environmental Health Services Division of the Health Services Agency shall provide staff support for the Commission. The Environmental Health Director, or their designated representative, shall serve as the Administrative Secretary to the Commission and shall receive copies of all minutes, reports and recommendations submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Commission. Staff members from the Community Development and Infrastructure Department, the Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency, and the County Counsel's office shall provide services to the Commission, and shall attend Commission meetings upon request.
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- (A) Sub-committees may be appointed, as needed, by the Chair with the majority approval of the Commission. The Chair, with the majority approval of the Commission, shall terminate each sub-committee when its function is no longer necessary.
 - (B) The Commission Chair shall report the name, purpose, and membership of each standing sub-committee established to assist the Commission for longer than six (6) months.
 - (C) Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the Chair.
 - (D) All sub-committees shall comply with the notice and agenda requirements otherwise applicable to the Commission in these by-laws, except for

subcommittees composed solely of less than a quorum of the members of the Commission which are not standing sub-committees of the Commission with either a continuing subject jurisdiction or a meeting schedule fixed by resolution or other formal action of the Commission.

F. AGENDAS.

- (A) Commissioners who wish to place an item on the agenda shall give that item to the staff of the Commission at least one week in advance of the meeting. If the agenda for the next meeting is already full, staff may suggest that the item be postponed to a later meeting.
- (B) At least seventy-two (72) hours prior to each regular meeting, an agenda for the regular meeting shall be emailed to each Commission member, to each representative of the news media, and to each other person who has submitted a written request to the Commission for notification of meetings and shall be posted at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the regular meeting at a location that is freely accessible to the public, as well as posted to the Commission's website.
- (C) The agenda shall contain a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting. No action or discussion shall be undertaken on any item not appearing on the posted agenda except that members of the Commission may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by persons exercising their public testimony rights or ask a question for clarification, refer the matter to staff or to other resources for factual information, or request staff to report back at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter. Notwithstanding the foregoing, action may be taken on an item of business not appearing on the posted agenda upon a determination by two-thirds vote of the membership of the Commission, or if less than two-thirds of the members are present, by unanimous vote of those members present, that there is a need to take immediate action and that the need for action came to the attention of the County subsequent to the agenda being posted.
- (D) At least seventy-two (72) hours prior to each special meeting, an agenda for the special meeting shall be emailed to each Commission member, to each representative of the news media, and to each other person who has submitted a written request to the Commission for notification of meetings; and shall be posted every seventy-two (72) hours prior to the special meeting at a location that is freely accessible to members of the public and posted on the Commission's website. No business other than that listed on the agenda will be considered at a special meeting.
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PRELIMINARY

EXPLANATION

- Streets: Highways
- Wells
- Karst - Marble Outcrops
- Faults
- Streets: Major
- Potentially Limited Supply Areas
- SPCR Tunnels

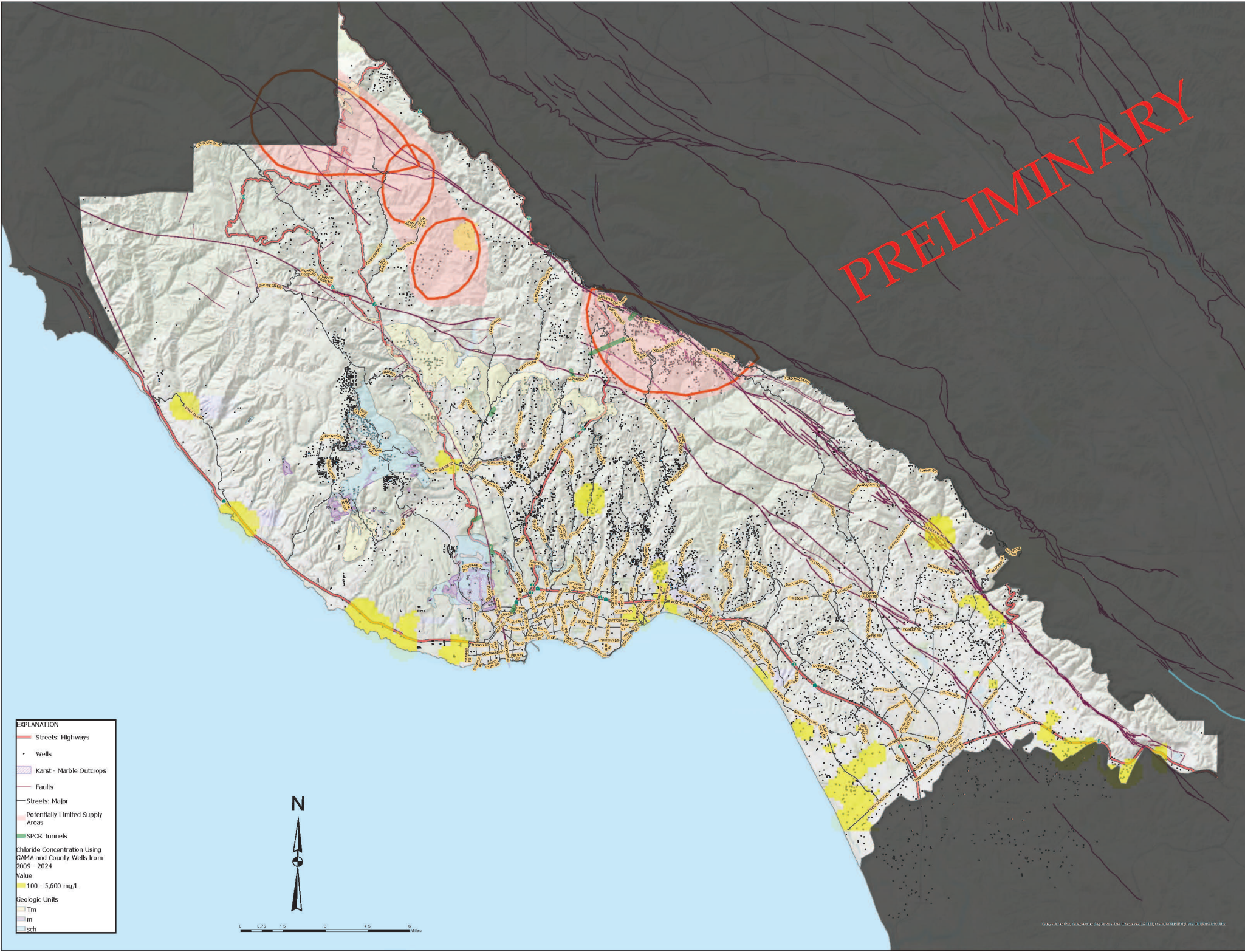
Chloride Concentration Using
GAMA and County Wells from
2009 - 2024

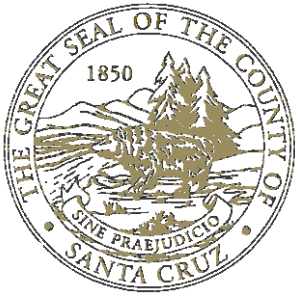
Value

- 100 - 5,600 mg/L

Geologic Units

- Tm
- m
- sch





County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 500, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4069
(831) 454-2200 • FAX: (831) 454-3262 TDD/TTY - Call 711

MANU KOENIG
FIRST DISTRICT

ZACH FRIEND
SECOND DISTRICT

JUSTIN CUMMINGS
THIRD DISTRICT

FELIPE HERNANDEZ
FOURTH DISTRICT

BRUCE MCPHERSON
FIFTH DISTRICT

February 13, 2024

Dear Members of the Water Advisory Commission :

Thank you for submitting your report highlighting the activities of the Water Advisory Commission in 2022 and 2023. While Board members review the Commission's minutes as they are received, we appreciate the opportunity to have this overview of the various issues considered by the Commission over the past two years.

Again, thank you for your report and for supporting the work of County government.

Sincerely,

JUSTIN CUMMINGS, Chair
Board of Supervisors

JC:jr

cc: Clerk of the Board



County of Santa Cruz
Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health



Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-3154 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.sceeh.com

EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us

March 5, 2024

Subject: Request for Letter to State Offices Seeking Comprehensive Incident Reports on Big Basin Water Company Failure

Dear Board of Supervisors,

In light of the severe and ongoing challenges caused by the previous mismanagement of the Big Basin Water Company (BBWC), the Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission (Commission) sees an opportunity to draw attention to both the successes and failures that have shaped the current situation and request that you direct staff to contact agencies and representatives involved in private utility oversight to ensure that lessons-learned can be captured and built upon.

The Commission acknowledges and appreciates the collaborative efforts that have resulted in significant achievements to keep the system operational, such as the regularly scheduled inter-agency meetings led by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Division of Drinking Water. The Commission understands that these meetings have provided valuable updates and promoted coordination among agency stakeholders. Additionally, the SWRCB, Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and the County have facilitated productive community meetings. The successful filing for receivership by the SWRCB and RWQCB, through the intervention of an experienced law firm, has removed the owners of BBWC from their role in system management, ensuring greater transparency, accountability and cooperation with regulators. Swift actions by the County and the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in providing emergency funding have safeguarded continued water access for customers despite frequent main breaks and declining well production.

However, it is essential to reflect upon specific failures and lack of safeguards on a state level that have contributed to the BBWC's unfortunate situation, and what lessons they might provide, including:

1. Long-standing Drinking Water Violations: Numerous years of drinking water violations, both pre-dating the CZU fire in 2020 and thereafter.
2. Insufficient Wastewater System Oversight: The inoperable wastewater system continued to receive waste and issued will-serve letters for two years after the CZU fire without direct intervention from the RWQCB, which allowed for overflows and mosquito breeding at the wastewater treatment facility.

3. Inadequate Water Rates: BBWC's water rates have long been significantly below neighboring systems, impacting financial stability.
4. Lack of Adequate Insurance: Insufficient insurance coverage for damage caused by the 2020 CZU fire exacerbated financial strain and led to the reliance on a single well for the entire system's water supply.
5. Inadequate Record Keeping: Lack of proper record-keeping, including the absence of a list of drinking water customers, hampered customer updates and system billing.
6. Inaccurate Statements of Diversion: Submission of wildly inaccurate information was included on Statements of Diversion which indicated ongoing violations of surface water rights, without any apparent review by regulators.
7. CPUC Rate Increase Delays: Despite the critical need, the CPUC rate increase process took over a year, causing financial challenges and delays in necessary system upgrades.
8. Lack of Qualified Receivers: Absence of a state-maintained list of individuals or firms qualified to act as a court-appointed Receiver delayed legal action.
9. Insufficient Resources for Receiver: No resources were provided to the Receiver by the state to manage the system, exacerbating an emergency situation in which system shutdown was considered amid ongoing uncertainty about how basic system operations will be financed.

To begin to address these challenges, and to prevent similar incidents, the Water Advisory Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors take action. The Commission proposes sending letters urging the following offices and entities to conduct an internal review of their own processes in light of this situation. Specifically, the Commission requests an a forensic examination of potential gaps in regulatory authority that led to this situation. The examination ought to include a description of barriers faced, consider necessary changes policies and procedure to prevent the recurrence of such issues, and document lessons learned. The Commission suggests letters be sent to:

- Governor Gavin Newsom
- Senator John Laird
- Speaker Robert Rivas
- Assemblymember Gail Pellerin
- State Water Resources Control Board
- California Public Utilities Commission
- Court-appointed Receiver of the Big Basin Water Company
- Secretary of Natural Resources
- Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

- Director of the Department of Water Resources

The Commission believes that a comprehensive incident report from these entities will provide valuable insights and inform necessary legislative and policy remedies. In addition, such an effort may help prevent a similar situation in Santa Cruz County, or elsewhere, in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Lockwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" being more prominent than the last name "Lockwood".

Brian Lockwood

Chair, Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission