



County of Santa Cruz



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

Environmental Health Division

701 Ocean St. Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-2022 TDD/ TTY: Call 711

EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcountyca.gov

www.scceh.org

AGENDA

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

Monday August 17, 2026, 4:30 pm

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

In-Person: **Fifth Floor Redwood Room, 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz.**

Remote via Teams:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/join/270379448389423?p=7XIK2DP6DiQtjPPgpl>

Meeting ID: 270 379 448 389 423

Passcode: Fu9P76hT

A. OPENING

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call

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 June 3, 2026
2. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
3. Drought Response Updates

D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Opportunity for Commissioners to provide brief updates

E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates

F. COMMISSION UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES

1. Local Primacy Agency Continuation Updates

Staff will provide updates on LPA Continuation discussions.

Attachments: WAC Letter

G. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2025 Urban Water Management Plans

Staff will present on the recently adopted 2025 Urban Water Management Plans from the five urban water suppliers in the County.

Attachments: Staff Memo

H. CORRESPONDENCE

None

I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:

None

J. ITEMS OF INTEREST

- <https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2026/07/23/aqua-cruz-board-game-offers-hands-on-learning-about-santa-cruz-water-supply/>
- [Guest Commentary | How Santa Cruz has met water needs – Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)
- [Guest Commentary | Is there water for Santa Cruz growth? – Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)
- [https://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/sonoma-county-water-ruling-22375974.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20\(Premium\)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email](https://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/sonoma-county-water-ruling-22375974.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20(Premium)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email)
- <https://mavensnotebook.com/2026/08/06/sonoma-county-wins-appeal-to-keep-well-permitting-ordinance-amendments/>
- <https://mavensnotebook.com/2026/08/06/press-release-appellate-court-confirms-groundwater-pumping-ruling-orders-sonoma-county-to-conduct-environmental-review-of-its-well-ordinance/>

K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

LAMP Updates

Ongoing evaluation of the LPA

Presentation by Sarah Perez on water supply

GSA annual reports

RCD presentation on recharge, maybe include LID requirements.

L. ADJOURNMENT



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Minutes

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION **Wednesday June 3, 2026, 4pm**

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

In-Person: **Fifth Floor Redwood Room, 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz.**

Remote via Teams

A. OPENING

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call

Cheap	Absent
Ernst	Present
Lego	Present
Perez	Present
Wilson	Present
Lockwood	Present
Gillespie	Present

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.

No Communications

C. CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine in nature and will be acted upon in one motion.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 1, 2026
2. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
3. Drought Response Updates

Moved Lockwood, seconded by Lego, unanimous approval

D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Perez – Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs) are due by July 1st. Santa Cruz goes to counsel next week. Reports describe in detail the water service areas, supplies, forecasts demand and supply deficits and a water shortage contingency plan.

Wilson – would like to see the UWMPs

Gillespie – Intertie 1 is constructed, whole project will be completed this fall. Manganese notification and response levels were released today. Within 30 days they must notice the community. The State is working to publish a public health goal and will likely become a primary MCL.

Lockwood – asked by DWR to serve on the California Water Plan Advisory Committee for 2027 and 2032. Different representatives from around the state. The people serving on the committee are published. A lot of bills are playing into this. Generally, SB 72 establishes a 9 mill AFY to find new/additional/conserved water by 2040, which feeds into the plan. Other bills that will state that aquifers are natural resources. First meetings were in May, recordings are posted online. Next meeting in August. Developing a Water Evaluation and Adaptation Planning model to look at all of California's water resources. Brian is the only person on the Central Coast on the Advisory Committee. When DWR is ready to meet with local communities, Commissioner Lockwood can help coordinate. Doesn't yet know what they will be voting on. There have been water plans every 5 years, but this now requires a greater level of public participation.

Paul Lego- Chromium VI litigation did not advance, the judge supported the State's decision. Community is deciding whether to appeal. San Andreas Mutual is now a few meetings in with EPA consultants to evaluate several alternatives to their Chrome VI treatment. Looking at centralized treatment, consolidation, and point of use reverse osmosis. Waiting for cost numbers and operational plans. CalMutuals is working on a template for Chrome VI response. The work the County developed will be integrated.

Went to the new PFAS treatment facility in April and got a tour. Supervisor De Serpa was there as well. They are planning on integrating Chrome VI in the future. Learned a lot about the facility. The size of that facility is comparable to SAM. Biggest operational cost of a system is the disposal of the waste. Without access to a sewer the question of disposal is a big problem.

E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates

Septic issues continue to be a priority for County supervisors. There has been some interest expressed by members of the Housing Advisory Commission on discussing the role of septic, there could be an opportunity for a joint meeting in the future.

SLVWD is anticipated to adopt a Letter of Intent to consolidate with Bic Basin Water Company after a series of positive meetings with the State Water Board Division of Financial Assistance.

Water Resources staff partnered with CDI on a grant application to fund some culvert replacement design projects on Casserly Creek where fish migration is limited by failing culverts.

Sierra has been invited to participate in the California Water Plan Technical Working Group.

F. COMMISSION UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES

1. Local Primacy Agency Continuation Updates

Staff will provide updates on LPA Continuation discussions.

Attachments: Staff Report

Survey Results

Sean Abbey presents the results.

Every water system in the LPA was sent the survey. Around 38% of systems responded. Most systems that responded were supportive of the LPA. Systems expressed a willingness to increase fee.

Jeremy Montes (local operator) says that not all of the systems that received the survey are engaged and may not have realized the importance.

Lego – understands it's hard for staff to go to the higher ups to say that we need more money. For a survey to have people state that they are willing to pay more is a big deal. Strong case that the community wants to keep this. Would like to provide a letter to support this.

Adam Holbrook (local operator). He was not asked about this by his systems when the survey was released. Very concerned about transitioning to State Control. Recognizes that some people may be concerned about increasing rates, however he thinks more would be concerned about going to the State. County has offered more leeway in terms of recognition that the systems have their best interest in mind. In 2019 there was a

meeting hosted by the County that included Joe Serrano and he made it clear that their goal was to consolidate.

Greg (with Jarvis Mutual). Wants to second what Adam just said. A matter of concern for private customers, a lot more confidence in local control.

Jeremy Montes – SB 552 is already pushing towards coordination to take away the small systems. Systems spend a lot more money in power than the permit fees. It is fractional. Does not think the price of the permit is a hinge factor. Many companies see the price of water like the price of gasoline – it goes up. The value of the permit is critical, we have to have it and we would like to stay with our regulators. Dreads any interaction with the State. It makes you want to quit. Says his people were willing to triple the fees.

Lego is willing to work on that and do the first draft and give review and editorial. Lockwood recommends an outreach campaign.

Paul Lego moves to create a subcommittee of commissioner Lego, Wilson, Ernst to write a letter in support keeping the LPA with the arguments that have been heard. Seconded by Lockwood. Unanimous approval.

G. NEW BUSINESS

1. New Environmental Health Software Tools

Staff will present how Environmental Health and the Water Resources program are utilizing new software and tools.

Attachments: Staff Report

Examples of Claude Code pilot outputs

The software transition to HS Gov did not work as anticipated, so staff are postponing that demo.

Kevin Harmon presents about the use of AI pilot projects.

Lockwood asks about the AI policy. The County has one but it is outdated. We can add it as a document that the AI pulls from, so it can warn us if we may be violating the policy.

Kevin hosted a live demo where the commission asked about declining water use and it was able to pull from data in the water status reports.

H. CORRESPONDENCE

None

I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:

None

J. ITEMS OF INTEREST

None

K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

LAMP Updates

Urban Water Management Plans

Ongoing evaluation of the LPA

Presentation by Sarah Perez on water supply

GSA annual reports

RCD presentation on recharge, maybe include LID requirements.

L. ADJOURNMENT 6:00



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Subject: August 17, 2026 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

- Grant Funded Projects
 - Department of Conservation (DoC) Multibenefit Land Repurposing Grant, \$8.89 million: Staff and consultants continue to meet monthly with DoC staff and the Statewide Support Entity (SSE); Steering Committee Meeting #3 occurred on June 23, 2026; to date, PV Water and partners have received approximately \$3.96 million of the grant award; more information and an input survey is available at: <https://www.pvwater.org/pajaro-valley-mlrp>.
- College Lake Integrated Resources Management Project
 - Water Treatment Plant & Intake Facility: Commissioning meetings are ongoing; testing of the treatment process with different types of polymers and chemical dosage ratios continues with all due diligence.
 - Treated Water Pipeline: Project closeout activities are ongoing.
 - Environmental: Monitoring continues per permit requirements; annual reports have been submitted per the permit requirements; staff and consultants are continuing work on a CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Routine Maintenance Agreement for continuing maintenance activities as described in the Adaptive Management Plan.
 - Adaptive Management Plan (AMP): Staff and consultants presented the Water Year 2025 AMP Annual Report to the Projects & Facility Operations Committee on June 24, 2026, and had a follow-up meeting with Jerry Busch on July 9, 2026. The PV Water Board of Directors voted on July 15, 2026, to accept and file the report.

- Aesthetic plantings as per the Environmental Impact Report's Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Program are underway.
 - Outreach Activities: Website and social media updates are ongoing.
- Watsonville Slough System Managed Aquifer Recharge & Recovery Projects
 - Permitting: The Santa Cruz County Planning Commission approved the Coastal Development Permit for the Project on July 8, 2026, during a meeting in which PV Water's staff presented the Project; work on other permit applications continues.
 - Environmental: Consultants collected bathymetry data of portions of the Watsonville Slough System in support of permitting activities.
 - Outreach: Communications are ongoing; staff and the support team continue to meet with property owners.
 - Property Rights: Seven of eleven properties have closed escrow, others remain pending.
- Supplemental Well No. 3 Improvements Project
 - Construction meetings are occurring bi-weekly; electrical work commenced on June 12, 2026.
- Recycled Water Facility Electrical Upgrades Project
 - The project is near completion. Distribution Pump No. 4 pump is being pulled and repaired or replaced outside of the Project; costs will be included in regular O&M charges.
 - SCADA security upgrades are continuing.
- Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Well Monitoring Network Expansion
 - Permitting: Work is ongoing to obtain a Coastal Development Permit for wells in the Coastal Zone. Staff met with County of Santa Cruz staff to discuss the permit application on June 17, 2026. Biological and cultural resource surveys to inform the permitting process occurred on February 26, 2026; consultants prepared reports documenting the surveys to support the coastal development permit application.
 - Property Rights: Staff continues engagement with property owners about proposed wells located on privately owned land. Discussions to acquire permanent and temporary construction easements are ongoing. Staff have engaged Mid Coast Engineers to conduct site surveying and prepare plats and legal descriptions.
 - Environmental: Staff is engaged with consultants to prepare categorical exemptions in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency

- The Agency Board met on June 18, 2026. At the meeting, the Board:
 - Unanimously approved the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency 5-Year Funding Framework for the period July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2031. No new fees on private well owners or de minimis groundwater users were adopted as part of the approved framework.

The approved framework is based on two guiding principles:

1. Administrative and governance costs are shared equally among the four Member Agencies, recognizing that all agencies benefit from MGA serving as the Basin's Groundwater Sustainability Agency.
2. Technical SGMA compliance costs are weighted toward areas where groundwater sustainability challenges, particularly seawater intrusion, drive the greatest need for monitoring, analysis, planning, and reporting.

The resulting contribution shares are:

- Soquel Creek Water District – 55%
- City of Santa Cruz – 25%
- County of Santa Cruz – 10%
- Central Water District – 10%

Additional information is available at:

<https://www.midcountygroundwater.org/sgma-compliance-funding/>

- Adopted the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 budget.
- Received an overview from staff on the potential future Basin groundwater demand impacts associated with the Regional Housing Needs Assessment.
- The Agency has recently completed a comprehensive update to its website (www.midcountygroundwater.org)

Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency

- The Agency Board met on May 28, 2026. At the meeting, the Board:
- Received an update of hydrologic and groundwater level conditions in the Basin.

- Received recommendations and provided direction on the Basin GSP Periodic Evaluation and GSP Amendment.
- Approved the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 budget.
- Appointed an ad hoc committee to oversee the process to fill a vacancy for a private well owner representative on the Agency Board.
 - The next regular meeting of the Agency is on August 27, 2026, at 6:00 pm.

By: Sierra Ryan, Water Resources Program Manager with information from Rob Swartz and Brian Lockwood.



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Subject: August 17, 2026, Water Advisory Commission

Title: Drought Response & Outreach Plan (DROP) Update

Background:

On September 23, 2021, Senate Bill (SB) 552 was signed into law and 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 assumed responsibility for implementing [SB 552](#) and received regular updates on the progress of implementation.

Updates:

- Currently, roughly 350 applicants have enrolled in the Regional Waterboards free well testing program. 319 wells have been tested and there is a steady stream of new applicants.
- Since the June meeting, 55 new testing results have been received. Of those tested, 7 exceeded a drinking water MCL, specifically E. coli, Arsenic, or Hexavalent Chromium (CR6).
 - In total, 47 wells have exceeded an MCL, or 15.4% of all wells tested.
- Staff provided guidance to well-owners with Total Coliform detections and Manganese exceedances.
- In late June, POU treatment units were successfully installed at the Rountree Facility in South County, which tested above the limit for several PFAS compounds. The units were tested shortly after installation and there was no detectable level of PFAS compounds at any of the treatment units.
- Staff worked with the State Water Board to update the grant agreement language to allow replacement water to be provided whenever a water source goes dry, not just due to drought conditions. This will allow more support for known areas with limited groundwater supplies.

By: Sean Abbey

Water Quality Specialist III

June 15, 2026

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: Water Advisory Commission Recommendation to Retain Santa Cruz County as Local Primacy Agency (LPA) for Small Water Systems

Dear Members of the Board:

The Water Advisory Commission has recently been advised by staff that the County is considering returning oversight of 68 small water systems to the California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water, due to the high cost of running the program.

We think that this decision would be a mistake.

Most of the 68 public water systems that the County currently manages are very small and face significant operational, financial, and regulatory challenges. Over the last several years, the State has introduced new requirements that increase reporting obligations, technical and managerial capacity requirements, and water quality standards. Emerging contaminants such as PFAS, Chromium-6, 1,2,3-TCP, and updated radionuclide standards are creating increasingly complex compliance challenges. The question before the County is not whether these requirements will arrive, but whether local systems will have access to knowledgeable local regulators to help navigate them successfully.

As drinking water standards continue to evolve, many small systems may face requirements to install advanced treatment technologies, develop alternative water supplies, consolidate with neighboring systems, or make other significant infrastructure investments. These improvements may be necessary to protect public health, but they can also impose disproportionate financial burdens on small systems with limited ratepayer bases. While these costs will exist regardless of whether oversight is provided locally or by the State, Santa Cruz County Water Resources staff have demonstrated an ability to work collaboratively with local systems to identify practical, cost-effective compliance pathways that reflect local conditions and operational realities. A centralized statewide regulatory structure will not be able to provide the same level of familiarity with local circumstances or direct technical assistance.

Santa Cruz County Water Resources staff has done an exceptional job of working with the small water systems under its LPA jurisdiction. Staff provide hands-on, accessible guidance that helps these systems remain viable while continuing to protect public health. They understand the unique geographic, geologic, hydrologic, and climatic conditions of our local watersheds and can provide rapid assistance during water emergencies.

A recent survey of our County small water systems showed that over 70% of respondents would prefer County LPA management over State management and would also be willing to pay higher fees to keep County LPA management. Those survey results send a very clear message that local

oversight matters, and that small water companies are concerned about the consequences of State oversight.

We have attached the survey and encourage you to especially read the comments from our water companies.

The County has also invested substantial effort through its drought preparedness and resilience initiatives, including implementation of Senate Bill 552 through the Drought Response and Outreach Plan implementation. Retaining local primacy complements these efforts by preserving local relationships, institutional knowledge, and technical capacity within the same communities most vulnerable to water quality and water supply challenges.

Our Commission understands the need for fiscal responsibility. However, eliminating the LPA for cost savings alone risks overlooking the long-term value of local expertise. The Big Basin Water Company experience demonstrated the importance of local expertise during water system emergencies. Although the system was regulated directly by the State, it was County staff that ultimately played a critical role in coordinating emergency response, technical assistance, and recovery efforts.

We do not expect continuation of the LPA to come without cost. We support development of a long-term funding strategy that includes phased multi-year fee increases, pursuit of available State and federal grants, and periodic evaluation of program performance. These measures will take time and may not fully offset the cost of maintaining approximately two full time employees dedicated to the program. Nevertheless, State oversight will not provide the same level of direct technical assistance, local familiarity, or responsiveness currently available through County staff.

Over the next decade, small water systems will face unprecedented challenges associated with emerging contaminants, aging infrastructure, climate variability, and increasingly stringent drinking water standards. The County's Local Primacy Agency provides not only regulatory oversight, but also technical expertise, local knowledge, and trusted relationships that help small systems navigate these challenges while continuing to protect public health. We believe these benefits justify continued County participation in the LPA program.

Thank you for your continued leadership and for considering our input on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nate Gillespie".

Nate Gillespie
Chairman, Santa Cruz County Water Advisory Commission

(Attachment: Results of Local Primacy Agency Survey)



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Subject: August 17 2026, Water Advisory Commission

Title: 2026 Urban Water Management Plans

Recommended Action: Receive Presentation

Background:

The California Water Code requires urban water suppliers within the state to prepare and adopt Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs) for submission to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). The UWMPs, which are required to be filed every five years, must satisfy the requirements of the Urban Water Management Planning Act (UWMP Act) of 1983, including amendments that have been made to the Act and other applicable regulations.

The purpose of the UWMP is for water suppliers to evaluate their long-term resource plans and establish management measures to ensure adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future demands. The UWMP provides a framework to help water suppliers maintain efficient use of urban water supplies, continue to promote conservation programs and policies, ensure that sufficient water supplies are available for future beneficial use, and provide a mechanism for response during drought conditions.

The 2025 Urban Water Management Plans were due by July 1, 2026 and estimate water demand through 2050. Staff will provide some key findings. The completed documents are linked below:

Complete Documents:

- 1) San Lorenzo Valley Water District: <https://www.slwvd.com/257/Urban-Water-Management-Plan>
- 2) Scotts Valley Water District: <https://www.svwd.org/meetingfiles/12343/agendas/f2cb21d02fb74f79999abc3506860c10.pdf> (starts on page 5.1-5)

- 3) City of Santa Cruz Water Department:
<https://www.santacruzca.gov/Government/City-Departments/Water-Department/Reports-and-Plans/Urban-Water-Management-Plan>
- 4) Soquel Creek Water District: <https://www.soquelcreekwater.org/253/Urban-Water-Management-Plan>
- 5) City of Watsonville: <https://www.watsonville.gov/1205/Water-Management-Plan>

By: Sierra Ryan