



Business Services & External Affairs Division

Water Advisory Committee (WAC) Quarterly Update

May 2025

Community Engagement

Water and Energy Education

- To date, 590 classes—including 13,727 students—have received direct instruction through classroom lessons and field trips.
- We look forward to celebrating the teachers and students involved in seven “A Call to Action” grant projects, and to announcing the winners of our annual High School Video Contest at NorCal Public Media’s Food & Wine Awards Night on Saturday, May 10th.

Community Engagement

- Proud to partner with City of Santa Rosa on Earth Day this year.
- If not already subscribed to the Current, our monthly newsletter please sign up at Sonomawater.org
- Spring social messaging is having fun with goats vegetation management and the word of the week. Like- share and follow.
- Lake Sonoma is open daily 10-4. Our ambassadors are always happy to see you. Lake Sonoma for school groups happening through May and daily tours will start in June on Fridays- detail to be announced soon.
- Water transmission tours for the public and our Spanish language tours continue quarterly. Sign up online at sonomwater.org

Public Information Office

- Coordinating public information effort with the Eel Russian Project Authority including updated fact sheets, website and stakeholder presentations.
- Assisting with coordination of upper Russian River water managers meetings.

Recent press releases

- 4/22 – Sonoma Water Board approves wholesale water rate adjustment to fund critical infrastructure
- 2/4 - Lake Sonoma to host 16th annual Steelhead Festival Feb. 8
- 1/28 - Public meeting to discuss alternatives for possible future consolidation of West County sewer treatment

Recent News Headlines:

- 4/29 – Press Democrat - Amid pleas to ‘Santa Trump,’ dam removals stay on track as feds rule out takeover of PG&E’s Potter Valley plant
- 4/29 – MendoFever - Setting the record straight: Inviting Trump to interfere with the Potter Valley Project—An Op-Ed
- 4/22 – KRCB - Marin water board explores Russian River pipeline
- 4/10 - Sonoma Sun - Sonoma Water Reports Water Supplies Are High As the Rainy Season Draws To a Close
- 4/2 – SFGate - Northern California town hall erupts over PG&E's 'dangerous' reservoir plan
- 4/1 – Press Democrat - Santa Rosa considering utility rate increases to help fund upgrades to aging system
- 2/12 – Press Democrat - Historic pact reached on future Eel River water flows into Russian River
- February issue – Sonoma Magazine - Those Working To Preserve the Russian River Watershed’s Native Coho Salmon Offer Hope for a Flourishing Future

Business IT

Ongoing Projects

- Stream Maintenance Application Rewrite: Regulatory-required application modernization, enhancing public information access
- Group Policy Audit Project: Making significant progress aligning with Security Testing and Remediation initiatives
- Verizon to FirstNet Migration: Testing and planning in progress for enhanced emergency services communication.

Cost savings:

- \$10,000/month with new FirstNet system
- \$250,000 savings with new Azure Stack HCI migration

- \$20,000 annual savings with new Teams Cloud migration

Fiscal Services

- Water deliveries and water revenues are estimated to come in at budget OR possibly slightly above budget. We won't know until July when we get the final figures for the year.
- Through March 31, active capital and large non routine maintenance projects such as tank recoats and cathodic protection are 50% to 90% complete and we are expecting that after a couple of large construction contracts (OCC Rd Well \$4.8M; cathodic protection phase 1) are encumbered in Q4 that these figures will be even higher. There are several projects that have experienced delays due to long lead times (supply chain issues), constructability challenges, CEQA, and other design constraints.

Grant Funded Programs

- Occidental Rd Well awarded in March 2025 (\$4.8M contract) and has \$3.1M in offsetting DWR grant revenue remaining.
- Ely Booster Pump Station is moving forward and will be wrapped up in FY25/26 with \$2M in offsetting FEMA funds remaining.
- Warm Springs Dam Hydroturbine Project will be awarded in FY25/26 and has funding in offsetting PWRPA P3 Funds.
- USBR Cape Horn Dam design Project – USBR \$2M in funding has been unfrozen and is moving forward.
- Looking at applying for FEMA HMGP Funding for the Bennett Valley Fault Crossing (Sonoma AQ) which is currently at 60% design.
- Sonoma Water is collaborating with Department of Emergency Management on a Drought Resiliency Planning Project that is funded with \$372.5K in County Climate Resiliency Funds. Expect the Drought Resilience Plan to be completed in December 2025.
- Sonoma Water's technical support for the GSA's continues in FY25/26 with \$2.65M in offsetting grant revenue.

Human Resources/Administration

Clerical/records updates:

- Records management consultant secured
- Intranet redesign agreement with County IT department in process.

Human resources:

- 263 full-time employment positions
- Recruitments open:
 - Water Agency Plant Operator-In-Training (closes 05/05/2025)
 - Real Property and Right of Way Manager (in process of interviews)

Government Affairs

State (Mark Fenstermaker, Pacific Policy Group)

- Activity in the Legislature has been full throttle at the end of April as the deadline for bills to move through policy committees is May 2.
- In the natural resources, water, and utility committees, two policy issues are commanding the narrative and the majority of proposed bills: energy affordability and permitting reform. There are several bill proposals related to water policy, but there are fewer bills than in past years. Accordingly, Sonoma Water has taken a position of support on two proposed pieces of legislation as follows:
 - SB 599 (Caballero) - This bill seeks to add to DWR's Atmospheric Rivers and Forecast Improvement Program the use of experimental tools that produce seasonal (1-6 months) and subseasonal (2-6 weeks) atmospheric river forecasts. Senator Caballero has also submitted a budget request to fund the additional work the bill will require of DWR. Sonoma Water was prepared to provide lead testimony in support of the bill at the Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee but the bill was placed and passed on the consent calendar.
 - SB 654 (Stern) - This bill seeks to extend state funding for the administration of the Water Energy Nexus Registry. Sonoma Water provided lead witness testimony for the bill at the Senate Environmental Quality Committee.
- On the budget front, Governor Newsom's May Revision looms large as it is anticipated that the state's budget deficit will balloon due to the litany of actions from the Trump Administration as well as the impacts of the LA fires. When the Governor released his proposed 2025-26 budget back at the beginning of January, he claimed that the state was in a modest surplus position of several hundred million. This surplus was based on an agreement reached in 2024 to withdraw from the rainy day fund that is covering up a then projected \$7.1 billion deficit. Legislators, staff, and advocates around the capitol are all anticipating that the deficit will grow from \$7.1 billion to a figure that will require the Legislature and Governor to contemplate additional cuts.

- Despite the bleak outlook of the state's General Fund, the passage of the Climate Bond or Prop 4 provides a safety valve for potential funding for Sonoma Water project needs. Our advocacy efforts have focused on increasing the State Coastal Conservancy's allocation of funding for dam removal or related water infrastructure as this provision of Prop 4 can fund planning and design work on the New Eel Russian Facility to replace the PVP. Staff and our advocate in Sacramento, Pacific Policy Group, have met with the State Coastal Conservancy and our delegation of legislators.
- The Governor must produce his May Revision by May 15. The Legislature is required to pass its budget proposal by June 15 and the Governor must sign the budget by June 30. It is anticipated that additional budget bills will be considered throughout the summer until the 2025 session concludes on September 12.

Federal (Natural Resources Results, Van Ness Feldman, Thorn Run)

- **Status of FY25 Appropriations:** On March 15, 2025, the President enacted H.R. 1968, the FY2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, which funds the government at FY24 levels through September 30, 2025.
- **FY2026 Budget and Appropriations:** The Trump Administration's FY26 proposed budget has not yet been submitted to Congress. A "skinny budget," which will likely provide topline funding requests for each of the 12 appropriations bills for FY26, is expected in the coming weeks, followed by a more detailed budget request. Lawmakers will then need to develop and pass FY26 appropriations bills prior to September 30th or advance a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the federal government funded after that date.
- **Status of Sonoma Water Appropriations Priorities**
 - With the federal government funded at FY24 levels through September 30, 2025, appropriations largely remain unchanged for the current fiscal year. FY25 appropriations do not include report language.
 - \$13M for mussel prevention
 - Wildfire prevention committee language for Corps facilities
 - Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery. \$65 million was appropriated for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund in FY25. With indications that the fund may not be included in the President's FY26 budget, Sonoma Water and other stakeholders prepared and sent letters to lawmakers encouraging full funding for the program for the next fiscal year.
 - \$1M for subseasonal to seasonal forecasting programming
 - \$900,000 for Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information

- WaterSMART funding. From the committee report accompanying the FY2024 House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act:
 - \$0 for the WaterSMART Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program (FY23 enacted = \$5 million)
 - \$13.6 million for WaterSMART Grants (FY23 enacted = \$65 million)
 - \$2.25 million for WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management (FY23 enacted = \$5 million)
 - \$24 million for WaterSMART Drought Response (FY23 enacted = \$38 million)
 - \$19 million for Desal and Water Purification (FY23 enacted = \$17 million)
 - \$134 million for the WIIN Act Storage Account (FY23 enacted = \$134 million)
- Weather Act Reauthorization
 - Sonoma Water and other stakeholders are advocating for passage of the Weather Act reauthorization this year, including the S2S pilot projects.