**Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water)/Russian River County Sanitation District (District)**

**West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Study (Study)**

**Stakeholder Committee Meeting #3**

May 14, 2025

SUMMARY

**Stakeholder Committee Participants:**

- Matt Herman, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Tina Low, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Steve Trippe, Lower Russian River Wastewater Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
- Dan Fein, CAG
- Chad Davisson, Graton CSD and Forestville Water District
- Kyla Brooke, Local Realtor
- Todd Hunsdorfer, County of Sonoma
- Alexis Ver Berkmoes, Private Citizen
- Rich Holmer, CAG
- Brenda Adelman, Russian River Watershed Protection Committee
- Matt McDermott, Forestville Water District

**Members of the Public:**

- Brian Grant, CAG
- Dave Coleman, Brelje& Race Consulting Engineers

**Staff, Consultants, and other Agencies Present**

- Parastou Hooshialsadat (Sonoma Water)
- Andrea Rodriguez (Sonoma Water)
- Kent Gylfe (Sonoma Water)
- Carlos Diaz (Sonoma Water)
- George Lincoln (Sonoma Water)
- Kathryn Geis (Consultant)
- Sam Magill (Consultant
- Mona Doughtery, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

**Stakeholder Committee Members Absent:**

- Debbie Ramirez, D5 Municipal Advisory Council
- Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
- Nathan Quarles, County of Sonoma

***: Stakeholder Committee members**

**NOTE:** Meeting materials and a recording of the discussion are available online at https://www.sonomawater.org/westcountystudy.

**Action Items and Assignments**

1. Staff will circulate the meeting poll for individuals unable to complete it during the meeting. The poll may be accessed online at: https://csus.zoom.us/survey/aJaq_vimt689QNCQveeOzMfmLmUtVtxJfQhLWLXwmc4pa3OcnA4.qZU_w80NWvR7x_HQ/view?id=EF-2A9lFQHmlyLAbnsOLxQ#/sharePreview or by scanning the QR code below  with your smart device: [1]

[1] **PLEASE NOTE:** Preliminary results from the meeting poll are presented in the summary below; additional results submitted via the survey will be presented at West County Feasibility Study Stakeholder Committee meeting #4.

2. The next meeting of the Stakeholder Committee is scheduled for August 27, 2025 at 4:00pm. Participants may register for the meeting at https://csus.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMsceCsqDgpEtIi8WMBctvfUYBxeWNeHhnz.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Kent Gylfe, Sonoma Water Director of Engineering, thanked participants for attending and provided opening remarks on behalf of Sonoma Water and the Russian River County Sanitation District (District). Kent also noted that the funding for the design of Graton/Occidental sewer transfer pipeline project was recently approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

After opening remarks, Sam Magill, Sacramento State University College of Continuing Education, reviewed the meeting agenda and led introductions. He explained the purpose of the third meeting was to review initial alternatives for the Study and the qualitative criteria used to refine those alternatives. Following presentation of the criteria and alternatives, meeting participants will fill out a short poll to select their preferred alternative(s) for further analysis.

**Review Study Scope of Work and Timeline**

Parastou Hooshialsadat, Sonoma Water, provided an overview of the Study scope of work and timeline. The purpose of the Study is to assess the feasibility and benefits of combining four existing districts within the West County, evaluate the potential for regional projects to serve unsewered communities, assess the amount of recycled water available for reuse, and evaluate the benefits of regionalization on climate adaptation and resiliency. Currently, the Study is focused on the first goal of assessing the feasibility of combining existing systems; the next step in the Study process will be to analyze unsewered communities.

Parastou noted that this is the third Stakeholder Committee meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for August 27, 2025, and will focus on an analysis of serving unsewered communities The draft feasibility study will be submitted to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board in November 2025. The final Project Advancement Report is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2026.

**Overview of Study Alternatives**

Kathryn Gies, West Yost Engineers, provided an overview of current Study alternatives. Eight alternatives were developed for analysis and fall into three general categories: local facility scenarios, export scenarios, and combination scenarios (including both local facility improvements and export of wastewater to Santa Rosa or Windsor). The eight alternatives include:

- 1a: Develop and improve two separate regional facilities at the District (including a new Monte Rio facility) and the Forestville Water District(FWD)/Graton County Sanitation District (GCSD)
- 1b: Develop/improve one regional facility at the District
- 1c: Develop/improve one regional facility at FWD/GCSD
- 2a: Export to the Windsor wastewater treatment plant
- 2b: Export to the Santa Rosa wastewater treatment plant
- 2c: Export to both Santa Rosa and Windsor (District+ Monte Rio export to Windsor; FWD, GCSD, and Occidental Community Services District export to Santa Rosa)

- 3a: Combination of 1b with FWD, GCSD, and OCSD exporting to Santa Rosa
- 3b: Combination of 1c with the District and Monte Rio exporting to Windsor

After the presentation of alternatives, the following discussion was recorded (staff responses are provided as sub-bullets where available):

- Todd Hunsdorfer asked if the alternatives include an opportunity to incorporate other communities in the region.
    - Staff confirmed neighboring communities could be incorporated into alternatives
- Steve Trippe and Brenda Adelman asked if the Study will look at unsewered communities.
    - Staff confirmed unsewered communities will be analyzed in the next phase of the Study. Between 10 and12 community clusters of unsewered areas will be applied to selected alternatives for further analysis. The goal is to look at unsewered communities based on preferred alternatives (as opposed to all eight initial alternatives).

**Review of Selection Criteria and Methodology for Study Alternatives**

Kathryn provided an overview of the criteria and methodology used to analyze the alternatives. The Study includes both a preliminary cost analysis and ranking, the application of qualitative criteria to all alternatives, and a "Monte Carlo Analysis" of the alternatives combining both the preliminary cost analysis and qualitative criteria.[2] Based on the Monte Carlo Analysis, Alternatives 1a, 1c, 2a, 2b, and 3b appear to score the highest. Conversely, Alternatives 1b, 2c, and 3a scored the lowest. Kathryn noted that significant variability in the scores exist at this time; further analysis will be needed to refine cost estimates and criteria/reduce scoring variability based on engineering and community feedback. The analysis does not include connection or rate and fee estimates at this time.

After the presentation, the following discussion was recorded:

- Tina Low asked if recycled water cost estimates include storage and transportation.
    - Staff confirmed cost estimates include storage and transportation. It is believed recycled water flows can be accommodated in the current system; storage and transportation costs increase for the export and combined scenarios.
- Brian Grant asked if the cost for recycled water (treatment, export, and storage) are included in facility upgrade estimates.
    - Staff confirmed recycled water costs are included in the estimate.
- Todd asked how environmental factors such as stream crossings were included in the qualitative criteria.
    - Staff noted stream crossings were included in the environmental qualitative criteria, but not in the resiliency criteria to avoid double-counting factors for the Monte Carlo analysis. Stream crossings can be addressed in pipeline alignment in the future as well. Treatment facility and conveyance layouts, as well as planning-level lifecycle cost analysis will be carried out in the next phase of the Study.
- Brenda asked how known issues with the District's wastewater collection system will be addressed in the Study.
    - Staff noted that known issues with collection systems must be addressed by all alternatives.

[2] Qualitative criteria include: the reliability/ease of operation, long-term regulatory compliance, flexibility for adding critical unsewered communities, local recycled water benefits, environmental issues, resiliency (including wildfire and climate adaptability, and ease of implementation.

- Todd noted disassociating (separating) qualitative criteria from quantitative (cost) analysis is likely necessary at this point but can impact scoring.
- Todd and Steve noted that things like regulatory compliance are mandatory and must be addressed for the preferred alternatives (regardless of how they are weighted in the analysis).
- Dave Coleman asked if ranking will be re-done once unsewered communities are analyzed; additionally, limiting analysis to a few preferred alternatives may be premature before unsewered communities are considered.
    - Staff confirmed analysis including unsewered communities will be done for 3-4 preferred alternatives. The belief is that preferred alternatives will likely include both local and export options, so the high-level analysis is unlikely to change significantly.
- Rich Holmer noted that some current collection systems are more deficient than others. If a community connects to the District system, they could be held liable for future violations. He asked if collection system upgrades were included in the cost analysis. Participants also suggested treatment plant repair or upgrade should be included.
    - Staff responded that collection system upgrades aren't included in the analysis. Each existing or potential new district (i.e., GCSD, FWD, etc.) will be responsible for upgrading and maintaining its collection system independent of any Study alternatives. The full Study report acknowledges deficiencies in *all* collection systems. Participants added that upgrade/repair costs to collection systems will likely be substantial.
- Staff noted that the qualitative ranking shouldn't change too much in the next phase of the analysis. There will likely be less opportunity for unsewered communities to connect to local alternatives than export/combination alternatives.
- Does the approved Occidental/Graton pipeline create additional opportunities such as new public sewer access?
    - Staff responded the baseline assumption for all alternatives is that the Occidental/Graton pipeline will happen, and is included in the analysis.
- Participants reiterated that part of the cost to ratepayers includes fines and penalties for District violations. New customers will be liable for those costs.
    - Staff responded that liability will have to be addressed in governance agreements and goes beyond the scope of this project.
- Participants said that explaining costs of connecting *as well as* NOT connecting in the future is important for securing future funding and building support from future ratepayers. Governance issues are also important in explaining the need for a regionalized approach to wastewater: Congressman Mike Thompson's office estimated at least 1,000 new connections are needed to justify costs. Combining FWD, GCSD, and Occidental will help, but will fall short of 1,000 new connections.
    - Staff said that a full lifecycle analysis to refine costs will be included in the next phase of the Study. The total number of connections can be included in that analysis.
- Kyla Brooke asked if the Study differentiates between single family and multi-unit residences.
    - Staff said multi-unit residences are not distinguished at this phase in the Study. The goal is to evaluate what's feasible from an engineering perspective.

**Polling Questions**

Throughout the discussion, meeting participants were asked to provide feedback to a series of poll questions, including:

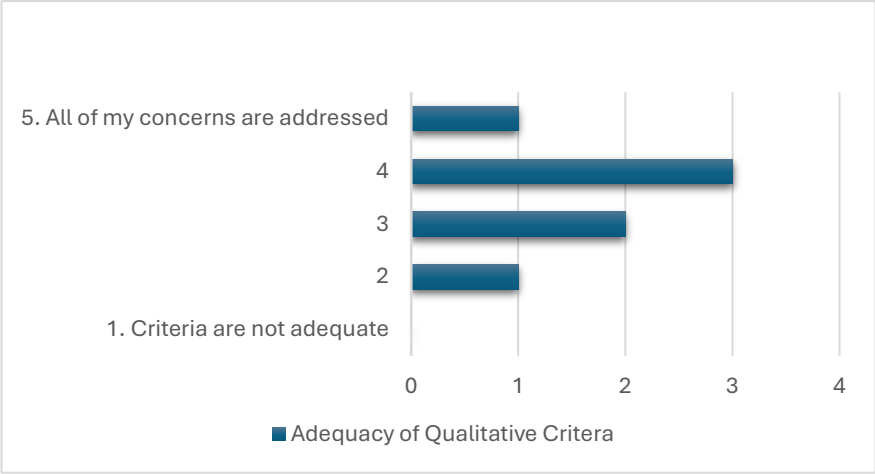
- Think about the criteria and methodology applied to the Study alternatives. From your perspective, do they adequately address the issues most important to you regarding wastewater treatment and

recycled water availability? (Pick from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning the criteria are not adequate and 5 meaning all of your concerns are addressed)

- How would you rank the qualitative criteria in order of importance (1= most important; 7= least important)?
- What is/are your preferred alternative(s)?

**A total of 7 Committee members** provided input via the online poll. Preliminary poll results are provide below **for Committee members only**, along with any additional explanation provided by participants. Final poll results will be shared at the next Stakeholder Committee meeting.

1a. Think about the criteria and methodology applied to the Study alternatives. From your perspective, do they adequately address the issues most important to you regarding wastewater treatment and recycled water availability? (Pick from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning the criteria are not adequate and 5 meaning all of your concerns are addressed)




1b. Please explain your choice. Are there additional criteria you think should be included in the analysis? (text entry)

- There is absolutely no way to identify all potential issues with resolutions in a high level feasibility study. I believe that we need to move forward to decide on a path forward in order to focus future analysis.
- The broad range of consideration for waste and recycled water uses and treatment are on point with the topics of consideration.
- We need information on multi-units. Monte Rio and Villa Grande must be included. Costs are important.
- Thanks- they work for me as is.
- Need more quantification of serving unserved communities and consideration of governance/operating costs.
- Long-term operations and maintenance costs should be included.
- There are many shortcomings and omissions in the criteria, and the weighting is unclear. Specifically, existing improvements needed, operational costs, rates, etc.
- The long-term costs of each option need to be considered. Particularly with respect to the District and penalties assessed due to sanitary sewer overflow.

- At this level, no, this is a high level look at what might be feasible or what parts of the alternatives might be feasible for one or more areas.

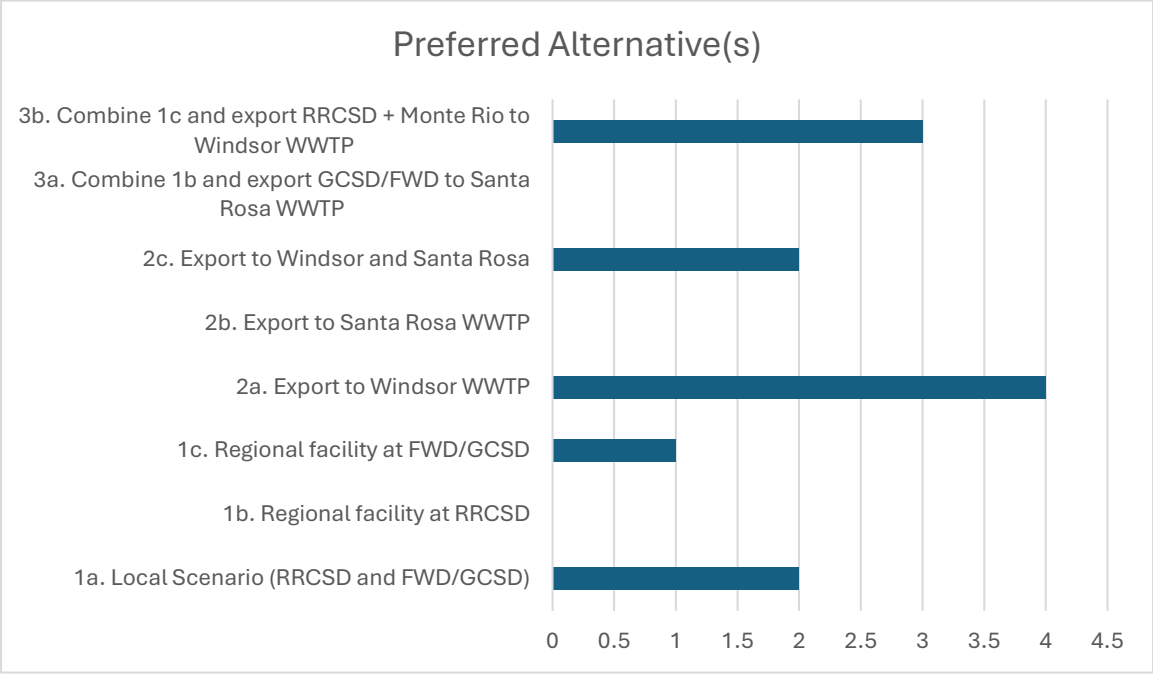
2. How would you rank the qualitative criteria in order of importance (1= most important; 7= least important)?

Participants were asked to rank the qualitative criteria below in order of importance, with 1 meaning "most important" and 7 meaning "least important" from their perspective. Please note that due to software limitations, participants were provided with the opportunity to rank multiple criteria as "most important". Scores for each criteria were combined to create an average score; the criteria with the lowest score represents "most important"; the highest score represents "lowest importance."

Criteria by order of importance according to poll results:

1. Flexibility for Adding Unsewered Communities: **Average score- 2.4**
2. Environmental [Benefits]: **Average score- 3**
3. Resiliency: **Average score- 3.28**
4 (Tied). Reliability/Ease of Operation: **Average score- 3.42**
4 (Tied). Local Recycled Water Benefits: **Average score- 3.42**
4 (Tied). Ease of Implementation: **Average score- 3.42**
5. Long-Term Regulatory Compliance: **Average score- 3.57**

3a. What is/are your preferred alternative(s)?




3b. Please provide any additional feedback on the alternatives you would like to provide. What resonated with you about the selected alternative(s)? What remaining questions do you have?

- I believe that 1a is the most preferable because of the cost, etc. It also expands local recycled water use and eliminates the need for river discharge.
- Export RRCSD to Windsor for treatment and local recycled water at Graton/Forestville.
- RRCSD collection system upgrade needed. It currently operates with a permit for 3.5 million gallons per day and realizing only 350,000 gallons per day. We have room for expansion of service locally, coupled with export flow to either the Laguna or Windsor.
- It's important to look at Windsor for recycled and alternative energy value. Hooking up unsewered communities is essential.

**Closing Comments**

Kent thanked participants for attending and provided closing comments. Sam noted the next Stakeholder Committee meeting is scheduled for August 27th at 4pm (**see Action Item #2**)