

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

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

Stakeholder Committee Meeting #7

April 22, 2026

SUMMARY

Stakeholder Committee Participants:

- Tina Low, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Steve Trippe, Lower Russian River Wastewater Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
- Kyla Brooke, Local Realtor
- Todd Hunsdorfer, County of Sonoma
- Rich Holmer, CAG
- Brenda Adelman, Russian River Watershed Protection Committee
- Dan Fein, CAG
- Chad Davisson, Graton CSD and Forestville Water District
- Kelsey Cody, North Coast Water Quality Control Board
- Erica Kalve, State Water Resources Control Board
- Parastou Hooshalsadat, Sonoma Water
- Andrea Rodriguez, Sonoma Water
- Kent Gylfe, Sonoma Water
- Carlos Diaz, Sonoma Water
- George Lincoln, Sonoma Water
- Kathryn Geis, Consultant
- Sam Magill, Consultant
- Ann DuBay, Sonoma Water
- Mark Bramfitty, Sonoma County Local Agency Formation Commission

Members of the Public:

- Sarah Yardley, CAG
- Cynthia Strecker

Staff, Consultants, and other Agencies present

- Dania Jimmerson, State Water Resources Control Board

Stakeholder Committee Members Absent:

- Matt Herman, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Alexis Ver Berkmoes, Private Citizen
- Debbie Ramirez, D5 Municipal Advisory Council
- Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
- Matt McDermott, Forestville Water District
- Nathan Quarles, County of Sonoma

NOTE: Meeting materials and a recording of the discussion are available online at

<https://www.sonomawater.org/westcountystudy>.

Action Items and Assignments

1. Stakeholder Committee (Committee) members will provide comments to staff on the Draft Final Study by close of business Friday, January 16th.

Welcome and Introductions

Kent Gylfe, Sonoma Water Director of Engineering, thanked participants for attending. He noted this meeting marks a shift in the Study process; previous meetings focused on the Feasibility Study itself; this meeting is focused on the Project Advancement Report (PAR). The PAR is expected to take the technical outcomes of the Study and look at what a “roadmap” for implementation could look like based on community input, and whether a Study alternative or combination of alternatives that should move forward in the near term. Kent

closed by noting Committee member Brenda Adelman was recently featured in the [Santa Rosa] Press Democrat for her leadership in wastewater management and thanked her for her continued input on this critical topic.

Review Study Scope of Work and Timeline

Parastou Hooshalsadat presented the scope of work and timeline for all Study components, including the PAR. The Study represents an initial evaluation of technically feasible engineering elements of regionalized system. As Kent noted, the PAR relies on community input to understand perspectives on the Study alternatives and develop a roadmap for implementation for items not analyzed from a technical perspective such as wastewater governance and finance. Input will be solicited through future Committee meetings and an in-person June stakeholder workshop. Development of the PAR represents the last major deliverable as part of the Stakeholder Committee process, with a final draft due to the North Coast Water Quality Control Board in Q4 2026.

Presentation and Discussion of Final Study Alternatives

Kathryn Gies, West Yost, provided an overview of the final Study alternatives. Based on Committee and Sonoma Water comments, the Study was revised in Q1 2026; a final version (including all comments received to date) is available online at <https://www.sonomawater.org/westcountystudy>. Key updates to the Study in the final version include:

- The January 2026 spill at the RRCSD treatment plant is currently under investigation; an assessment will be complete this year. Facility improvements (and associated costs) beyond the Study alternatives may be needed to support continued operations.
- Investment in inflow and infiltration (I&I) management is needed before and *new* flows to the RRCSD facility are accepted.
- Details on known hazards such as seismic risks were added for a more complete understanding of threats to infrastructure.
- Cost estimates were updated to include outcomes from the Monte Rio/Villa Grande Wastewater Solutions Feasibility and Preliminary Design Report as well as new system lifecycle costs. The revised analysis notes that given the significant increase in costs for RRCSD customers, new funding would be more efficiently spent addressing known issues at the RRCSD facility instead of abandoning it completely for a new system. A summary of revised costs per Equivalent Single Dwelling (ESD) is provided in the tables A and B below for Study alternatives 1A and 1C; the column in blue represents the largest overall cost estimate modifications. Note that 1A as modified in the 2026 final report is considered the most cost-effective Study alternative. An updated comparison of *all* Study alternatives is provided in Table C.

ID	Name	Number of ESDs	Alternative 1a	Alternative 1c
1	Guerneville South of River	55	0.16	0.18
2	Guerneville North of River	58	0.16	0.19
3	Northwood	196	0.14	0.16
4	Hwy 116 East of Guerneville	119	0.20	0.19
5	Summerhome Park Road	103	0.18	0.17
6	Hacienda and Hollydale	443	0.16	0.15
7	River Road North of Forestville	454	0.15	0.14
8	Forestville	173	0.15	0.14
9	Hwy 116 between Forestville and Graton	161	0.15	0.13
10	Graton West	70	0.17	0.16
11	Camp Meeker	376	0.15	0.14
12	Monte Rio/Villa Grande	943	0.12	0.14
Total ESDs		3,151		
ESD-Weighted Average CapEx per ESD			0.14	0.15

Table B: November 2025 Report

ID	Name	Number of ESDs	Alternative 1a ^(a)	Alternative 1c
1	Guerneville South of River	55	0.187	0.206
2	Guerneville North of River	58	0.214	0.239
3	Northwood	196	0.179	0.201
4	Hwy 116 East of Guerneville	119	0.259	0.184
5	Summerhome Park Road	103	0.269	0.217
6	Hacienda and Hollydale	443	0.239	0.186
7	River Road North of Forestville	454	0.208	0.163
8	Forestville	173	0.213	0.169
9	Hwy 116 between Forestville and Graton	161	0.204	0.157
10	Graton West	70	0.236	0.191
11	Camp Meeker	376	0.211	0.167
12	Monte Rio/Villa Grande	943	0.153	0.175
Total ESDs		3,151		
ESD-Weighted Average CapEx per ESD			0.200	0.180

Table A: Updated Report

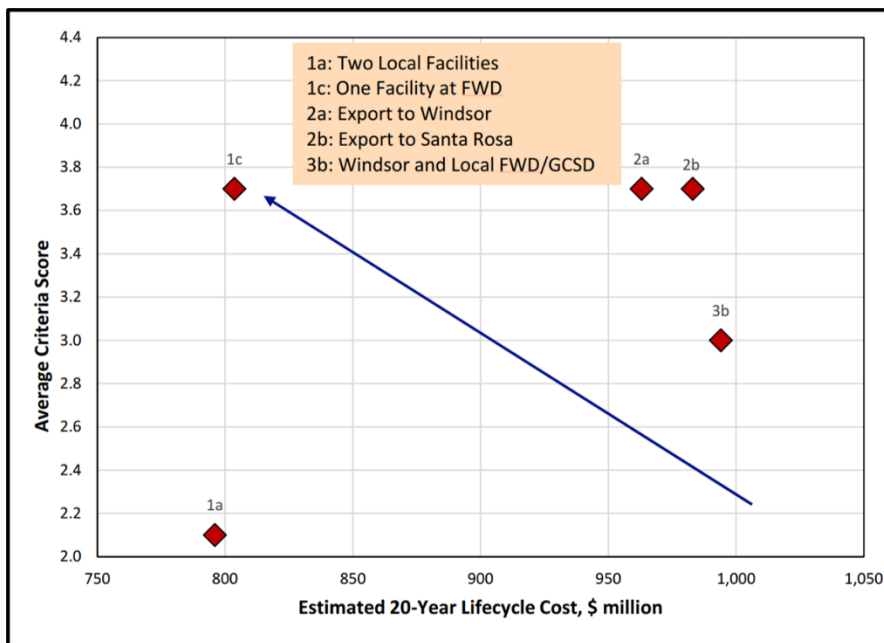


Table C: Updated Comparison of Alternatives

Discussion: Confirm Committee Support of Alternatives Components

Following the presentation, the following discussion was recorded:

- Dan Fein noted all alternatives include Camp Meeker, but not Occidental and asked if Occidental would be included.
 - Kathryn responded Occidental already has a centralized sewer system, and a project is currently underway to connect it to Graton.

- Sarah Yardley asked if all costs were listed in millions of dollars.
 - Kathryn confirmed costs are in millions of dollars.
- Brenda Adelman noted cost estimates rarely match the final implementation costs, and asked if the engineering team has taken this into account.
 - Kathryn acknowledged there are always a lot of unknowns when producing cost estimates, but all of the numbers reported above include “estimating contingencies”. As engineering designs are refined, this estimated amount is reduced to reflect more accurate projected costs. All projects must include a construction contingency fund (held in escrow) at roughly 5-10% of the total cost. The numbers report above include a conservative estimating contingency to reflect potential project overages and unknowns in the design.
- Steve Trippe asked if an analysis has been conducted to determine the best Study alternative based on the overall health of the Russian River or operations and maintenance (O&M) benefits (i.e., excluding cost estimates in the comparison). He noted that by excluding costs, some of the export alternatives may end up providing greater overall benefit.
 - Parastou noted the qualitative comparison of alternatives *did* look at benefits to the health of the river and for O&M beyond costs. Additionally, it may be challenging to “sell” the project to communities such as Occidental that have already made significant investments in their existing infrastructure; abandoning it for an export alternative could be challenging.
- Steve asked if the cost estimates include the cost of abating existing septic and impacts to current ratepayers.
 - Kathryn noted the costs to unsewered communities were taken directly from the Monte Rio report and do include these elements. The Monte Rio report is included as an attachment to the Study.
- Chad Davisson recommended including information in the PAR on which elements from the Study have the highest probability of successful implementation. These elements could be compared to which logistical issues may generate the greatest hurdles (such as governance, revising urban services areas, funding and finance, etc.).
- Kyla Brooke asked if unsewered communities in Monte Rio and Villa Grande would face the large cost increases in the revised estimates.
 - Kathryn confirmed that Monte Rio and Villa Grande have the lowest costs in the revised estimates (this is reflected in Tables A and B above).
- Kyla noted that the 2026 RRCSD spill has caused significant concern in Guerneville and elsewhere on the long-term viability of the facility. Monte Rio and Villa Grande are actively investigating the idea of a special septic district as well to avoid new connections. Both of these factors could negatively impact regionalization. Steve added the CAG generally agrees and is not currently supportive of a regionalization option similar to Alternative 1A that relies on directing new flows to RRCSD. This is a direct result of the January spill.
 - Kathryn noted regionalization generally and Alternative 1A specifically are contingent on RRCSD issues not only being addressed for current customers, but ensuring the facility can adequately accommodate new flows. It should be noted that the spill was not caused by the facility itself but instead appears to be related to I&I issues with the collection system.
 - Kent added Sonoma Water is getting close to receiving a \$47 million grant to invest in the collection system. Although this will not address every issue, it is a major step in the right direction.

Presentation of Governance and Finance Options

Dannia Jimmerson, State Water Resources Control Board, provided a presentation on potential State funding sources for septic-to-sewer conversion (SSC). State programs through SB 1215 (2019) may be available for SSC depending on income levels and “a reasonable potential to cause” water quality challenges such as a violation of water quality objectives. Disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities (DACs and SDACs, respectively) are eligible for more funding than other communities. Generally, unsewered communities should be less than 3 miles to the nearest connection point for sewer service to participate in the program.

SSC and regionalization funds through the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Financial Assistance (DFA) are available to small DAC/SDAC communities (< 20,000 residents); additional capital improvement funding for existing facilities is available for communities or agencies facing an open enforcement order (i.e., a water boards notice of violation for NPDES or WDRs). The DFA limit for SSC in these types of projects is \$50 million; for individual projects exceeding that amount, low/no interest loans from a variety of public and private funders may be available. Funding is also available for technical assistance and planning efforts related to SSC.

Following the presentation on potential statewide SSC funding, Mark Bramfitt, Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), provide a brief presentation on governance options for a regionalized wastewater management system. Mark noted the project area includes four existing agencies. When considering a future regionalized system, there are two potential options from the LAFCO perspective: add territory to one or more districts or consolidate two or more districts.

LAFCO plays a critical role in establishing new governance bodies or consolidating existing bodies, but if the project is considered likely to be successful, it will receive approval. Mark did note that environmental documentation is critical as design moves forward: as properties are connected to sewer, every lot becomes buildable. A lot of these areas are not within the existing urban service area, and the County’s general plan does not consider them buildable without new sewer/water service. As such, the effort could require general plan revision as well.

Finally, building community support for a project from the outset is also important. The LAFCO process includes protest provisions; if LAFCO receives pushback from the community, it is likely to influence final approval of a new governance structure. Assuming the project appears to be technical viable with adequate funding and community support, the exact governance structure will [likely] receive LAFCO approval. Mark *did* note that joint powers agreements (JPAs) between agencies are generally not viable, since JPAs are not always legally enforceable governance agreements.

Closing Comments

Sam noted a public workshop on the PAR will be held in person (location TBD) on June 17; the next virtual Committee meeting is scheduled for August 18 at 4pm. Kent thanked Committee members for their participation and closed the meeting.