

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

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

Stakeholder Committee Meeting #8

August 18, 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
- Matt Herman, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Andrea Rodriguez, Sonoma Water
- Kent Gylfe, Sonoma Water
- Carlos Diaz, Sonoma Water
- Kathryn Geis, Consultant
- Sam Magill, Consultant
- Ann DuBay, Sonoma Water
- Jonathan Bell, Consultant

Members of the Public:

- Sarah Yardley, CAG
- Cynthia Strecker

Staff, Consultants, and other Agencies present

- Parastou Hooshalsadat, Sonoma Water

Stakeholder Committee Members Absent:

- 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
- Chad Davisson, Graton CSD and Forestville Water District
- Kelsey Cody, North Coast Water Quality Control Board

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

Action Items and Assignments

1. Todd Hunsdorfer will reach out to Sonoma County Planning Department for information on the Sonoma County General Plan update and how it might impact the Project Advancement Report (PAR) and regionalization.
2. Sam Magill will send out the draft PAR and PAR development schedule to Stakeholder Committee (Committee) members for review immediately. **Complete.**

Welcome and Introductions

Kent Gylfe, Sonoma Water Director of Engineering, thanked participants for attending. He noted this meeting marks the end of the Committee process after 2 years of work and 8 Committee meetings. The focus of the meeting is the Project Advancement Report (PAR); staff will walk through the PAR and solicit feedback on the implementation roadmap as one potential path forward for regionalized wastewater management in the West County.

Review Study Scope of Work and Timeline

Parastou Hooshalsadat provided a recap of the Feasibility Study scope of work and timeline, noting the Feasibility Study sought to explore opportunities for combining existing wastewater service providers in the West County, incorporating unsewered communities into a regional wastewater system, and evaluating the potential for recycled water use in the region. The Feasibility Study was accepted by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Board) in May 2026; the second deliverable of the effort is the PAR, due to the North Coast Board in October 2026.

Project Advancement Report (PAR)

Sam Magill and Ann DuBay provided a brief overview of the PAR. The PAR provides a short overview of the Feasibility Study process, findings, and stakeholder engagement outcomes, as well as a potential roadmap for implementing elements of regionalized wastewater system. It is not intended to showcase the *only* method for regionalization, or a roadmap representing consensus on the part of the Committee. The PAR is organized into six sections:

1. Introduction
2. Executive Summary
3. Summary of Feasibility Study Findings
4. Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes
5. Implementation Roadmap
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Sam noted the presentation and discussion will focus primarily on Sections 5 and 6. Following an overview of the PAR, Parastou reviewed the implementation roadmap. This roadmap lays out a potential approach for financing, planning, and construction of a regionalized system using a phased approach with near, mid, and long-term actions. It includes four primary components, including governances, RRCSD improvements, Graton Community Services District (GCSD)/Occidental Community Services District (OCSD)/Forestville Water District (FWD) consolidation, and unsewered community incorporation. The roadmap uses Feasibility Study alternative 1a (two local hubs of treatment in RRCSD and GCSD/OCSD/FWD) as a basis for regionalization.

Following the presentation, the following Committee discussion was recorded:

- Rich Holmer stressed the roadmap is based on the premise that funding and finance will be addressed further into the process. While engineering feasibility is important, affordability is critical for West County communities. Most communities including Monte Rio are considered disadvantaged, and regionalization could result in a loss of low-income housing associated with sewer connection. This will likely impact the ability of the public to support a regionalized system.
 - Sam agreed, noting Section 5 of the PAR lays out some potential funding sources, but without additional outside funding, implementing all regionalization elements could be challenging. Public support will also be critical to a fully developed regional wastewater management system.
- Steve Trippe noted the financing information in the PAR focuses on funding for large capital improvements, but the cost to individual homeowners with Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) will be very significant. Septic-to-sewer conversion (SSC) and operational costs of a regionalized system will likely exceed current operational costs for OWTS. As regionalization elements are developed, transparent and early communication with all community members on SSC costs is critical, including meeting community members where they are.

- Steve suggested the PAR should include specific information on the increasing regulatory burden on West County communities, such as what property owners need to do to comply with the [Russian River Total Maximum Daily Load](#) (TMDL) requirements. As currently written, the PAR does not include a lot of information on regulatory issues, which serve as the impetus for any regionalized actions. For the Monte Rio Feasibility Study, the CAG struggled with community engagement and bringing people along with the process. Although community meetings at the Monte Rio Community Center are good, much more focused and robust engagement is needed to explain the need for SSC and build support. The PAR should include a focused section on community engagement needs.
- Brenda Adelman noted community engagement and support is important, but the PAR also needs to include more information on the environmental challenges of wastewater treatment. It should include more information on the unique character of the West County and the potential impacts of urbanization from a regionalized wastewater management system. It is also important to double check this characterization for accuracy- the PAR names Guerneville as a “city,” when it is actually an unincorporated community. Rich concurred, noting the West County does not have the infrastructure for increased urbanization. While wastewater is one issue, roads are extremely narrow and water systems need significant upgrades. If a regionalized wastewater system is implemented and encourages growth, these other improvements are also critical and may not be possible in many areas.
- Brenda noted the implementation roadmap relies on SSC for unsewered communities, but before any conversion can happen, capacity issues at RRCSD must be addressed.
- Todd Hunsdorfer suggested all concerns listed above need to be addressed; the County Planning Department should be contacted to discuss what kind of protections may be needed for residents and what type of Sonoma County General Plan amendments may be required to implement a regionalized system. Steve noted the General Plan update is currently in the visioning phase; this process should be cross-referenced in the PAR. Todd offered to contact the Planning Department for more information (**see Action Item #1**).

Next Steps on PAR

Andrea Rodriguez presented a timeline for PAR development, comment, and submittal to the North Coast Board:

- Committee comments are due to staff by September 6.
- Staff will incorporate comments and prepare for official public comment by September 13.
- General public comment is due by October 4.
- Staff will incorporate public comment and prepare for submittal to the North Coast Board by October 23.

Staff and consultants will resend the working draft of the PAR and comment schedule to all Committee members as soon as possible (**see Action Item #2**).

Following the presentation, the following discussion was recorded:

- Steve asked if comment should be focused solely on the PAR, or all of the attachments (including the Feasibility Study).
 - Sam confirmed comments should be focused on the PAR. The Feasibility Study is already finalized.
- Steve suggested the PAR as written is fairly technical and may be challenging for a general public audience. A different version could be created with targeted, non-technical information for each of

the communities impacted by regionalization. This could include a specific engagement plan for future regionalization phases, including fact sheets. Todd noted some of this information may exist from previous wastewater management efforts in the region, and could be included as an attachment.

- Kent and Andrea reiterated that staff are available for any 1:1 conversations with Committee members as they prepare comments.
- Kent noted the suggested governance approach in the roadmap assumes there could be four distinct wastewater service providers to begin with (RRCSD, GCSD, OCSD, and FWD) to start with, but consolidation into a single regional entity could be considered in the future. Rich agreed starting with distinct entities is appropriate; some of these districts are operating well, while others need more work. *Starting* with consolidation could be a barrier for well-functioning districts to join a regionalized system if it assumes they will be responsible for issues outside of their current zones of influence. As issues are addressed, consolidation could be considered later in the process.
- Steve Trippe agreed that beginning with existing governance structures is appropriate.
- Rich stressed future community meetings need to be well thought out and moderated. There will be many different levels of knowledge coming into the meeting, and developing a baseline understanding of the issues is critical for generating support for regionalization. Meetings on the Monte Rio bridge replacement could serve as a model.
- Steve noted there are a significant number of community members who don't believe the current science showing impairment to the Russian River from wastewater issues. Including reports that explain this science could be useful for future outreach. Todd agreed.

Wrap Up/Next Steps

Kent thanked Committee members for their participation in the process, noting their input on the Feasibility Study and PAR are important for understanding perspectives in the West County and how regionalization could proceed.