

PROJECT ADVANCEMENT REPORT

West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Project

Prepared by: [Consultant/Agency]

Date: [Insert]

WORKING DRAFT

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Section 1: Introduction

West Sonoma County's forests, farms, and scenic small towns are great places to live and work. But when it comes to sewage disposal and treatment, west county residents face challenges. Until the middle of the last century, most west county communities relied on septic systems, cesspools and other onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) for wastewater disposal. In the 1950s, the Occidental and Forestville communities and the County of Sonoma adopted collective approaches to sewage treatment, creating sewer districts (the Occidental and Forestville County Sanitation Districts) and building collection systems and wastewater treatment plants. The Occidental County Sanitation District (OCSD) is now managed by Sonoma Water, while the Forestville system is operated by the Forestville Water District (FWD).

Following the passage of California's Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act in 1969 and the national Clean Water Act in 1972, state and federal funds flowed to local communities to establish wastewater treatment. In west Sonoma County, the Guerneville area community and the County of Sonoma formed the Russian River County Sanitation District (RRCSD) in 1983, and in the Graton community the Graton County Sanitation Zone was formed and constructed a sewer collection system and treatment plant between 1976-1979. RRCSD is now managed by Sonoma Water, and the Graton system is now operated by the Graton Community Services District (GCSD). Including OCSD and FWD, these four West County agencies serve a population of roughly 10,500 people.

For decades, these collection and treatment systems have supported economic development within these communities while improving public health and water quality by reducing the amount of harmful sewage entering the Russian River and its tributaries.

However, these sewer systems are now between 40- and 70-years old, with increased costs of maintenance and operations. At the same time, wastewater treatment standards have become more stringent while federal funds have slowed and state funding has become largely dependent on voter-approved bond measures, resulting in higher maintenance, operations and improvement costs being largely borne by local residents. As a result, smaller communities like Occidental – with only around 100 ratepayers – pay among the highest sewer rates in the state (despite being partially subsidized by Sonoma Water).

Concurrently, river communities that were once largely populated during the summer by vacationers are now filled with year-round residents. Outside the boundaries of sewer districts, much of West County has been developed into smaller parcels with residential

dwelling. These properties rely on OWTS, which – if older or not maintained -- can also contribute to water quality problems to the area's greatest natural resource: the Russian River.

Sewage treatment challenges are not unique to west Sonoma County. Similar issues exist throughout California, which is why the California State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) has established programs and funding to help unsewered communities join sewer districts and to help districts “regionalize” through consolidation of small districts or by larger districts absorbing small districts. Locally, several areas are taking steps toward consolidation, including the transition of the South Park County Sanitation District to the City of Santa Rosa and the transfer of wastewater services provided within the Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup Sanitation Zone to the Town of Windsor.

Could regionalization benefit west county sanitation systems by realizing increased efficiencies and by providing a larger population base to share the costs of regionalized systems versus the current four systems? Would a larger regional system(s) be able to collect and treat wastewater from unsewered communities (such as Monte Rio, whose economic development potential is at least partially limited due to its lack of wastewater treatment services)?

The [West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Study \(Feasibility Study\)](#) investigated this potential and answers a qualified “yes” to these questions. Specifically, the Feasibility Study found benefits of combining smaller systems and treating sewage locally (rather than the significantly more expensive options of exporting it to larger regional systems outside of west county).

The Feasibility Study suggests that the most viable approach may be to create a regional system that treats wastewater at two hubs (in Forestville/Graton area and in Guerneville) and that, over time, could provide treatment to 12 clusters of currently unsewered properties representing a population of roughly 7,500 people.

This proposed solution takes advantage of several efforts currently underway, including:

- A pipeline that is being designed to send Occidental's untreated wastewater to Graton for treatment.
- Ongoing conversations between sewer service providers in Forestville and Graton to determine opportunities for shared treatment of wastewater, expanded recycled water storage and use, along with continued discharge of recycled water to tributaries of the Russian River; and
- Nearly \$48 million in federal funding (through the State Clean Water Clean Water Revolving Fund Program) that has been received by the RRCSD in Guerneville to

upgrade the sewer plant's headworks (where sewage enters the treatment facility), as well as several of its eleven lift (pump) stations and its force mains – all critical junctures to reduce the risk of overflows and improve system reliability.

The last point – the significant funding received by RRCSD – is particularly important in light of a January 2026 sewage spill at its treatment plant. The spill pointed out some previously undefined vulnerabilities of the aging system and significantly eroded stakeholder trust in regionalization solutions that include RRCSD. By investing in infrastructure improvements in its collection and treatment systems, RRCSD hopes to build system resiliency, reduce future spills, and rebuild stakeholder trust even as climate change brings larger, more intense storms to the region.

The Feasibility Study and this Project Advancement Report (PAR) are initial steps in defining a multi-year process to improve wastewater management within the West County region, and this PAR specifically provides an Implementation Roadmap that is described in Section 5. There will be many chances in the future for people to engage and provide feedback – especially regarding unsewered communities joining sewer systems. Together, the people of west Sonoma County, the County of Sonoma and the many agencies that operate sewer districts have an opportunity to develop a reliable, efficient regional collection and treatment system that can withstand the challenges of our changing climate.

Section 2: Executive Summary

Summary of Project Purpose

In the winter of 2019, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Water Board) received notice of three unauthorized waste discharges from facilities operated by the RRCSD, which is managed by the Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water). Further inspection and analysis of the event attributed the discharges to inadequate funding to address aging infrastructure, a need for additional facility maintenance, and issues related to system capacity during extreme wet weather events. More information on the actions of the North Coast Water Board is available in [Order No. R1-2023-0049](#).

As a result of the discharges and subsequent cleanup and investigation by the North Coast Water Board, the RRCSD was required to implement an [Enhanced Compliance Action \(ECA\)](#) for the [West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Study \(Feasibility Study\)](#) with Stakeholder Committee Project. A major component of the project

was the formation of a Stakeholder Committee to better understand community issues and concerns associated with waste management and treatment in western Sonoma County.

This PAR summarizes key findings from the technical Feasibility Study completed in May of 2026, as well as recommendations and feedback received during Stakeholder Committee deliberations.

Study Overview and Structure

As discussed above, the ECA directed RRCSD to explore regionalized approaches to wastewater treatment in western Sonoma County to increase system reliability and recycled water opportunities in the face of a changing climate.

Sonoma Water is the manager of the project and hired West Yost Associates (consultant) to conduct the Feasibility Study. The goal for the Feasibility Study is to identify and evaluate alternatives for wastewater treatment and major conveyance infrastructure that would potentially be needed to support regionalization of wastewater treatment and support connection of unsewered areas within the West County area. Detailed engineering analysis, including defining the specific collection system infrastructure required within currently unsewered areas, selection of preferred treatment strategies, and design-level evaluations, are outside the scope of this work. Within that framework, the Feasibility Study is structured around a systematic, two- phase process. In the first phase, alternatives for regionalizing wastewater treatment for the four existing wastewater agencies that serve the West County study area were identified, screened and evaluated. These four existing agencies are as follows:

- RRCSD
- Forestville Water District (FWD)
- Graton Community Services District (GCSD)
- Occidental Community Services District (OCSD)

In the first phase, eight potential alternatives were identified and screened to define five preferred alternatives. The second phase of the evaluation involved further analysis of these five preferred alternatives to include the infrastructure required to receive, treat and recycle wastewater from nearby unsewered areas. Section 3 of the PAR examines the Feasibility Study findings and recommendations in more detail.

Overview of Stakeholder Committee and Outreach Efforts

As discussed above, a Stakeholder Committee was created to understand community interests and gather feedback from stakeholders directly impacted by wastewater treatment in western Sonoma County.

In the summer of 2024, Sacramento State University’s College of Continuing Education was engaged by Sonoma Water to conduct outreach efforts through direct conversations with agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs) and residents associated with wastewater treatment in the Feasibility Study project area including:

- Sonoma County
- [The Lower Russian River Wastewater Citizens Advisory Group \(CAG\)](#)
- The North Coast Water Board
- GCSD
- FWD
- Sonoma Water
- Residents of the Lower Russian River corridor within the City of Guerneville and the communities of Northwood, Monte Rio, Villa Grande, and others
- Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
- Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) such as Russian River Keeper and the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee

Following initial outreach to these parties, a stakeholder assessment (utilizing direct interviews with interested participants) was conducted to better understand initial opportunities and concerns associated with a regionalized approach to wastewater management. Based on the outcomes of this assessment, the Stakeholder Committee was formed with the following members:

- Brenda Adelman
- Alexis Averbuck
- Kyla Brook
- Chad Davisson
- Dan Fein
- Gary Helfrich
- Matthew Herman
- Rich Holmer
- Todd Hunsdorfer
- Tina Low
- Matt McDermott
- Steve Trippe

From October 22, 2024, to [INSERT FINAL DATE], a total of eight Stakeholder Committee meetings were held to review Feasibility Study components and findings and discuss mutually acceptable solutions to wastewater challenges in the project area. An additional workshop intended to solicit input from the general public in the project area was held in Monte Rio on June 17, 2026. Section 4 below provides more detailed information on specific outcomes.

In addition to the Stakeholder Committee process, outreach was also conducted to existing wastewater agencies in the project area and to parallel regulatory agencies and

organizations including Sonoma LAFCO and the State Water Resources Control Board. A summary of outcomes from this outreach effort is provided in Section 4.

As the project manager, Sonoma Water also maintained a comprehensive project [website](#) including announcements for and outcomes from each Stakeholder Committee meeting. Entries for each Stakeholder Committee meeting on the website include a recording, summary, and all presented materials. All meetings were open to the public and noticed via Next Door, the project website, and email communication to relevant stakeholder groups. In addition to the methods listed above, the public workshop on June 17, 2026, was also noticed by the County of Sonoma and through direct outreach from the office of Supervisor Lynda Hopkins.

Project Implementation Roadmap

Based on outcomes from the engineering analysis and stakeholder and community outreach, staff developed a potential implementation roadmap outlining a path forward for the development of a regionalized wastewater management system. Section 5 describes funding and governance needs, as well as a possible implementation schedule for specific components of this system including improvements to existing RRCSD facilities, the consolidation of small systems at GCSD, FWD, and OCSD, and connecting unsewered communities.

Section 3: Summary of Feasibility Study Findings

Findings and Recommendations

The technical Feasibility Study included site visits, interviews, document reviews and consultations with both a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Stakeholder Committee. The Feasibility Study was developed over several months through an iterative process, beginning with a “big picture” look at several options for regionalizing west county sewer services. This resulted in the development of 8 alternatives as described in Table 1 below.

Alternative	Short Description	Detailed Description
Local Facility Scenarios		
1a*	Two Local Facilities	RRCSD/Monte Rio/Villa Grande to RRCSD WWTP
		FWD/OCSD/GCSD flows to FWD/GSCD WWTPs
1b	One Facility at RRCSD	All West County flows to Expanded RRCSD WWTP
1c	One Facility at FWD	All West County flows to FWD/GCSD WWTPs
Export Scenarios		
2a*	Export to Windsor	All West County flows to Windsor WWTP
2b	Export to Santa Rosa	All West County flows to Santa Rosa WWTP
2c	Export to Windsor and Santa Rosa	RRCSD/Monte Rio/Villa Grande to Windsor WWTP
		FWD/OCSD/GCSD flows to Santa Rosa WWTP
Combination Scenarios		
3a	Treat at RRCSD	RRCSD/Monte Rio/Villa Grande to RRCSD WWTP
	GCSD/FWD Export to Santa Rosa	FWD/OCSD/GCSD flows to Santa Rosa WWTP
3b*	RRCSD Export to Windsor	RRCSD/Monte Rio/Villa Grande to Windsor WWTP
	Treat at GCSD/FWD	FWD/OCSD/GCSD flows to FWD/GCSD WWTPs

Table 1: Initial Feasibility Study Alternatives (* indicates alternatives with the highest initial support from the TAC and Stakeholder Committee)

Following identification of an initial list of alternatives, each option was analyzed using a series of quantitative and qualitative criteria designed to select the most viable option for regionalization. Quantitative criteria primarily focused on capital and operating costs over a 20-year period; qualitative criteria are described in Table 3-1 below.

Criteria	Description
Reliability/Ease of Operation	Are the proposed infrastructure components relatively simple to operate and maintain for the West County agencies?
Long-Term Regulatory Compliance	Does the alternative entail a long-term reliable treatment solution for meeting effluent quality requirements? Is there more risk for non-compliance?
Flexibility for Adding Unsewered Communities	To what extent does the proposed alignment allow for connections to unsewered, disadvantaged communities of interest?
Local Recycled Water Benefits	Does the alternative support West County recycled water opportunities?
Environmental	Is there potential for impacts to flood plains, wetlands, endangered species, historical and archaeological properties? Are efforts associated with handling wastes minimized? Is the alternative energy efficient and/or minimize power usage?
Resiliency	Is the proposed or retained infrastructure vulnerable to flooding, climate change and/or seismic impacts?
Ease of Implementation	Would the project construction be relatively simple, with regard to both treatment improvements and pipelines? What level of governance structure and agency coordination would be required? Can the project be reasonably phased into smaller elements to increase funding resources?

Table 2: Qualitative Scoring Criteria

Each step of this process and an in-depth description of the alternatives and recommendations can be found in the Feasibility Study as described below.

- Chapter 2 characterizes the service areas, regulatory requirements, treatment processes, recycled water uses, and challenges and opportunities of the four west Sonoma County wastewater treatment systems in the study area: RRCSD, GCSD, FWD, and OCSD,
- Chapter 3 identifies eight possible alternatives for regionalizing west county sewer services including consolidating small systems, exporting wastewater outside of west county to larger regional treatment plants, and combinations of consolidation and exporting wastewater and narrows the regionalization alternatives to five, based on rankings from both technical and stakeholder committees.
- Chapter 4 presents a high-level feasibility analysis for each of the five short-listed alternative that included 1) assessment of the costs of constructing regionalization pipelines, pumps and plant improvements, 2) the anticipated 20-year operating costs and 3) an assessment of several qualitative factors developed in partnership with both technical and stakeholder committees to define the most viable regionalization approaches.

- Chapter 5 identifies 12 clusters of currently unsewered communities that could be added to a regional system.
- Chapter 6 reviewed challenges and opportunities for recycled water use for the five alternatives.
- Chapter 7 considers challenges to each wastewater treatment system in a changing climate.
- Chapter 8 presents a similar analysis to Chapter 4, but incorporates the additional infrastructure needed to serve the 12 unsewered communities and concludes that alternatives that treat wastewater locally (rather than exporting wastewater to large treatment plants in Windsor and Santa Rosa) were the most cost-effective regionalization strategies.
- Chapter 9 of the study further clarifies the findings presented in Chapter 8 and provides key findings for each agency and recommendations for future work.

Based on the Feasibility Study analysis and input from the Stakeholder Committee and the TAC, local alternatives 1A and 1C were identified as the most viable options. The two local alternatives are described in more detail below:

Serving west county through two sewer treatment hubs (identified in the Feasibility Study as Alternative 1A): One located at the RRCSD and the second at a combined FWD/GCSD, which would also include treatment and reuse of sewage generated in the OCSD. In addition to serving existing customers, the hubs could also provide treatment for nearby unsewered community clusters.

This alternative originally envisioned that FWD/GCSD would end its current practice of discharging recycled water into tributaries of the Russian River during the winter and would instead recycle its water year-round through expanded storage and irrigation including possible use at local quarries (aka “zero discharge”). However, zero-discharge requires a significant (and expensive) expansion of the FWD/GCSD’s recycled water distribution system.

Two-Treatment Hub Cost: Its 20-year lifecycle cost (cost of constructing and operating over 20 years) is approximately \$796 million, with RRCSD’s share \$15 million, FWD/GCSD/OCSD’s share \$75 million, and unsewered communities’ share \$626 million.

While not specifically evaluated in the Feasibility Study, the consultants proposed upgrading the FWD/GCSD treatment plant to include biological nutrient removal in order to continue its current practice of discharging recycled water into tributaries of the Russian River during winter months. This modified Alternative 1a integrates some of the financial benefits of the two-treatment hub option with some of the qualitative scoring criteria

benefits of a single west county treatment plant located at FWD/GCSD (described below). The 20-year lifecycle cost of this modified alternative was not calculated, but the Feasibility Study estimates the construction costs would be substantially lower than Alternative 1A,

All west county sewage would be treated at a combined new wastewater treatment plant constructed at the FWD site (Alternative 1C). Wastewater generated by unsewered community clusters could also be treated at the plant.

In this alternative, a new treatment plant would be constructed at the FWD site to provide the level of treatment required for continued winter-season discharge. All other treatment plants (GCSD, RRCSD, OCSD) would essentially convert to storage and lift station facilities.

This alternative ranked the highest in seven qualitative criteria (reliability, resiliency, regulatory compliance, environmental, ease of implementation, flexibility for adding unsewered communities, and recycled water opportunities) as scored by members of both the Technical and Stakeholder committees. However, the alternative includes significant costs to the RRCSD's current ratepayers for closing the treatment plant, building pipelines and pump stations to convey wastewater to the FWD/GCSD and contributing to the cost of constructing and operating the new wastewater treatment plant at the FWD site.

Cost: The 20-year lifecycle cost of this alternative is \$804 million, with FWD/GCSD's share of \$48 million, RRCSD's share \$196 million, and unsewered communities' share \$561 million.

In early January 2026, after a Draft Feasibility Study had been submitted to the Regional Board for comments, wastewater overflowed from the RRCSD treatment plant for several days following a significant storm event. While Chapter 9 of the draft Feasibility Study included recommendations for ongoing RRCSD improvements, the final Feasibility Study (released in May 2026) emphasized the need for an ongoing commitment to significant investments in improving the RRCSD collection system, which is vulnerable to significant inundation during heavy storms and river flooding.

In addition, the Feasibility Study noted where additional studies are needed to support future regionalization. The Feasibility Study notes that as the entity responsible for management of local OWTS (i.e. the unsewered communities), it is anticipated that Sonoma County will take the lead in moving these efforts forward. Specifically, the Feasibility Study recommends the county evaluate strategies for consolidating resources with respect to management and operations of the individual community collection systems, as this approach can significantly reduce ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

Finally, the Feasibility Study recommends the local wastewater agencies evaluated as part of this study support consolidation activities by structuring their planning efforts and future projects in a manner that provides for the potential to accept unsewered flows in the future. Agencies can also support this effort by better defining costs for connection of unsewered parcels that are outside of their current service areas.

Section 4: Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes

This section provides an overview of key stakeholder engagement outcomes from the Stakeholder Committee, general public, and existing agency staff and leadership for outreach conducted from October 2024-August 2026, including:

- An overview of all major meetings and stakeholder engagement
- Documented outcomes from each major stakeholder engagement
- Conclusions and next steps for outreach

Stakeholder Committee

The Sacramento State facilitator assisting with public outreach formally launched outreach events by conducting a stakeholder assessment to better understand community perspectives on regionalization. The assessment focused on four primary areas:

- Understanding of current wastewater management challenges
- Potential solutions to challenges
- Limitations of potential solutions
- Outreach and coordination with other wastewater and recycled water efforts

Key findings from each of these areas included:

Understanding challenges

- Aging, outdated, and damaged infrastructure is unable to handle current amounts of wastewater.
- Climate change has exacerbated an already insufficient wastewater collection system.
- A significant portion of residents and businesses in the Project Area rely on outdated septic systems.
- During droughts, reliance on potable water for irrigation and industrial uses can reduce total water supplies and impact water conservation efforts.
- Ratepayers may end up paying the fees for unauthorized discharges. Proceeds from fees do not necessarily pay for system upgrades/wastewater mitigation.

Potential Solutions

- Regionalized approach linking four sanitary sewer districts in the Project Area with larger systems in Santa Rosa/Windsor
- Consolidate wastewater collection within unsewered communities and link them to existing districts.
- Provide funding through grants or forgivable loans for unsewered residences to replace/upgrade septic systems to comply with current water quality standards.
- Increase the availability of recycled water supplies to offset the use of potable water for irrigation and industrial uses in the Project Area
- Reclassify spill types at the Regional Water Board to ensure that funds from penalties/fees are returned to the impacted areas.

Limitations of Potential Solutions

- All participants agreed cost is the #1 limiting factor to solution implementation.
- The geography and topography of western Sonoma County poses challenges to a regionalized approach
- Perception of rural nature of the west county vs. increased sewer connections leading to more growth
- Prolonged disruption to the two primary transportation corridors from pipeline construction could negatively impact the Project Area
- Connecting unsewered residences could inadvertently “dewater” some vegetation.
- Governance issues

Outreach Needs and Coordination with Other Wastewater Efforts

- Coordination with other, ongoing wastewater efforts is key.
- Formation of a Stakeholder Committee is very important to ensure local feedback on any solutions.
- Western Sonoma County can be a challenging place to find accessible meeting venues. Consider virtual participation for discussions when possible.
- Meetings should be held in the early evening whenever possible to maximize participation.

Following completion of the assessment in October 2024, a Stakeholder Committee comprised of local government representatives, west county residents, and wastewater management/community service providers was convened to provide input on the Feasibility Study for Sonoma Water and RRCSD. From October 2024-August 2026, the Committee met eight times to discuss Feasibility Study and PAR components including

(but not limited to) regionalized wastewater solutions for the West County, cost estimates for identified Feasibility Study alternatives, and potential recycled water opportunities provided by the alternatives. A brief overview of topics discussed at each meeting is as follows:

- October 22, 2024: Staff provided an overview of the Feasibility Study purpose, background, and schedule, as well as a basic charter document to guide the Committee process.
- February 5, 2025: Staff reviewed requirements for the Feasibility Study as outlined in the ECA.
- May 14, 2025: Staff reviewed the eight proposed Feasibility Study alternatives and provided an overview of the evaluation process used to create a preliminary ranking.
- August 27, 2025: This meeting focused on refined evaluation of the alternatives identified above, including cost estimates for each action and an analysis of unsewered communities for connection to a regionalized wastewater system.
- October 29, 2025: A refined analysis of likely alternatives was provided to Stakeholder Committee members, including a detailed cost estimate incorporating recycled water opportunities and community cluster connections. Cost estimates from the Monte Rio-Villa Grande Wastewater Solutions Project, as well as costs associated with the removal of aging/outdated septic systems and replacement with new collection systems were incorporated in the analysis. Members also discussed the timeline for public comment on the draft Feasibility Study.
- January 12, 2026: Staff provided a review of the January 6, 2026 discharge/spill from the RRCSD Guerneville WWTP, reviewed comments received on the draft Feasibility Study to date, and provided an opportunity for additional comment.
- April 22, 2026: Staff provide an overview of the Final Feasibility Study alternatives as submitted to the North Coast Water Board and delivered presentations on potential funding/finance and governance opportunities for a regionalized wastewater system. More information on governance and finance are included in Sections 5 and 6 below.
- **INSERT FINAL MEETING DATE** (Tentatively August 18)

Complete meeting summaries and recordings of each discussion (including a roster of Stakeholder Committee participants) are available online at <https://www.sonomawater.org/westcountystudy>.

General Public Outreach

As part of the PAR development effort, a general public workshop to discuss an implementation roadmap for the Feasibility Study was held on June 17, 2026. The workshop was designed to solicit feedback from the general public on a straw proposal and roadmap for Feasibility Study implementation (see Section 5). Small group discussions provided important input on project implementation, wastewater management governance, and project funding/finance as summarized below:

Project Implementation

- One attendee suggested that the straw proposal/implementation roadmap should include a more complete vision of the preferred Feasibility Study alternative.
- A plan for Monte Rio-Villa Grande collection system development needs to be more clearly laid out in the implementation roadmap.
- Funding for adding the Monte Rio-Villa Grande cluster could happen earlier than laid out in the straw proposal if the 10% design could be funded and completed by Sonoma Water.
- The PAR should identify all the countywide proposals that have been/will be submitted to the state for State Revolving Fund (SRF) loans.
- The receiving entities (sanitation districts) should be the grant applicants for any state or federal grants.
- Unsewered communities may require a complete picture of the proposed project and associated costs in order to support it. Participants suggested the straw proposal/roadmap presented in Section 5 could consider moving outreach to unsewered communities further down in the process after collection system design is nearing completion.
- Technical assistance such as grant writing support is important for small districts: GCSD and FWD currently don't have capacity to take on this work.
- The implementation roadmap and this PAR should include a discussion of household incomes and how communities may/may not qualify as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) for the purposes of funding available through the State Water Board.

Governance

- Participants highlighted the importance of creating a governing body with adequate representation for all impacted communities. One option suggested a “project area wide” wastewater governing body with representation determined by the percentage of total flows from each community.
- Although consolidation may be possible in the long run, existing governance entities may be able to make decisions more easily than a new body.
- The recent consolidation of fire districts throughout Sonoma County could serve as a model for future water/wastewater service provider consolidation.
- Many of the participants at the workshop represented unsewered communities. These individuals stressed the critical importance of differentiating between areas with existing sewer service and potential *new* service to unsewered areas. They also stated unsewered areas (particularly Monte Rio and Villa Grande) are already considering an OWTS special district; a plan is already developed and may move faster than other unsewered areas.
- Determining governance early in the process will be important for securing outside funding and is likely required for state/federal grants (grants are generally issued to public agencies, Tribes, or non-profits).
- Participants commented that a consolidated governance structure may increase system resilience and the ability to share resources between communities or apply for outside funding.

Funding and Finance

- Affordability was the dominant concern. Participants repeatedly raised questions about connection costs, future rates, taxes, assessments, and the potential impacts on residents and businesses, particularly those on fixed incomes.
- Many participants wanted more certainty about funding. There was significant concern about how much of the project would be funded through grants versus costs borne by property owners, and whether funding would ultimately be secured.
- Participants questioned whether lower-cost alternatives had been fully explored. Suggestions included repairing existing facilities, improving septic systems, wastewater storage and trucking, and other approaches that might reduce costs while addressing wastewater issues.
- Protecting community character was a recurring theme. Participants expressed concerns that sewer expansion could encourage development, increase costs, and change the rural, small-town character of west county communities. It was also

noted that some areas might never have the opportunity to develop further without wastewater infrastructure (e.g. Monte Rio downtown)

- There was significant interest in improving wastewater infrastructure to reduce environmental impacts. Participants supported addressing aging infrastructure, wastewater overflows, and impacts to the Russian River, while seeking assurance that proposed solutions would effectively address these issues.

Outreach to Existing Wastewater Service Providers

In addition to outreach to the Committee and general public, staff convened a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of staff and leadership from existing wastewater service providers in the project area (RRCSD, GCSD, FWD, and OCSD). A brief overview of topics discussed at each meeting is as follows:

- August 27, 2024: TAC members convened to discuss the overall service area for the Feasibility Study.
- November 26, 2024: Staff provided an overview of preliminary alternatives for the Feasibility Study.
- March 18, 2025: The TAC met to refine and confirm the list of alternatives and develop a Regional Alternatives Technical Memorandum.
- June 1, 2025: TAC members met to define preferred alternatives for the Feasibility Study and begin ranking unsewered communities and priority connections for a regionalized wastewater system.
- September 10, 2025: Staff presented refined unsewered community clusters and presented information on recycled water supply and climate resiliency for Feasibility Study alternatives.
- November 28, 2025: Staff presented the draft Feasibility Study.

TAC members confirmed the Feasibility Study alternatives are technically viable, and if implemented, all alternatives would significantly improve longstanding wastewater management issues. RRCSD is committed to investments for addressing ongoing inflow and infiltration (I&I)-related capacity issues both in the collection system and at the existing RRCSD wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) beginning with its \$48 million upgrade of the lift stations, force mains, and WWTP headworks. Similarly, GCSD, FWD, and OCSD are supportive of taking steps toward a regionalized system to expand their service area, as evidenced by the Occidental/Graton pipeline project and ongoing conversations between FWD and GCSD to create opportunities for shared management of wastewater and

recycled water systems. These concepts are all reflected in the Feasibility Study and the suggested implementation roadmap in Section 5 below.

Outreach Outcomes and Recommendations

The Committee provided invaluable feedback on the Feasibility Study specifically and the regionalization concept more generally. Prior to the January 6, 2026, RRCSD spill, Committee participants were generally supportive of the concept of regionalization, with the caveat that solutions must be cost effective *and* be highly protective of water quality while maintaining local sovereignty in management decisions. They also agreed the engineering analysis in the Feasibility Study accurately defines unsewered communities within the project area, although depending on how project boundaries are defined, the specific number of unsewered parcels will fluctuate.

As noted in Section 3 above, the engineering analysis of a two-hub treatment system (as described in Alternative 1A) utilizing the RRCSD and FWD/GCSD/OCSD facilities shows a total projected cost of \$796 million, with RRCSD's share \$15 million, FWD/GCSD/OCSD's share \$75 million, and unsewered communities' share \$626 million . At the request of Stakeholder Committee members, the final Feasibility Study analysis includes anticipated costs related to septic decommissioning, new collection systems, and connection fees to new sewer lines for unsewered communities. Nonetheless, Stakeholder Committee members cautioned that the uncertainties around total costs, potential public funding (or lack thereof) to conduct septic-to-sewer upgrades, and fluctuating future wastewater rates are likely to raise concerns for the general public, particularly in unsewered areas. They noted that cost will likely be the determining factor for the long-term success of a regionalization effort and cautioned that unsewered individuals may not wish to connect to a sewage system absent significant financial incentives or regulatory orders. Additionally, septic to sewer conversion could trigger new assessments for existing structures, resulting in significant property tax implications for homeowners and businesses.

It should be noted that while cost was consistently identified as the most important factor from the Stakeholder Committee, it was not *the only* consideration. Stakeholder Committee members fully acknowledged the Russian River is the most important asset of and defining feature for all west county communities. Some members suggested that, given the large investment required to develop a fully regionalized wastewater system, alternatives should be explored to create a "gold standard" for protection of water quality and the environment. Staff acknowledge the critical importance of water quality and environmental protection. All alternatives analyzed in the Feasibility Study are assumed to

help involved sanitation entities meet or exceed current regulatory water quality standards. Specific projects within this broader regionalization approach will undergo individual, rigorous environmental analysis as design and permitting efforts move forward.

Stakeholder sentiment towards regionalization (both for the Stakeholder Committee and general public) shifted following the January 6, 2026 RRCSD spill. Committee members note that while the RRCSD facility may have the capacity to treat increased flows assuming unsewered communities are connected, the collection system is subject to significant I&I issues which can lead to events like the January 6 spill. They suggested that while the engineering analysis supports the use of existing facilities at RRCSD and FWD/GCSD, a history of spills and unauthorized discharges at RRCSD suggest that it may be more appropriate to construct a single new, significantly expanded facility at FWD/GCSD or to export wastewater flows to Windsor/Santa Rosa. Additionally, they noted residents in Monte Rio-Villa Grande (the largest unsewered community in the project area) are actively pursuing the formation of a special septic district to avoid connecting to a larger system.

Conclusions from Stakeholder Outreach

Aging infrastructure, an expanded population, and the transition from rural/agricultural to urban usage have exacerbated wastewater issues in the west county for decades.

Regionalizing wastewater management is an important potential strategy for addressing these issues and building resilience to climate change and population growth for decades to come. While the Feasibility Study and development of this PAR represent an important first step in the outreach process to analyze potential paths forward for a more resilient future in the west county, concerns in impacted communities persist on two primary issues:

Cost (including capital improvement costs, operating expenditures/future service fees, and potential reassessment of property values)

Environmental protection and sustainability (including the ability of existing facilities to adequately manage and treat existing flows as well as increase capacity for projected future flows by bringing in currently unsewered communities)

As individual components of a regionalized system are designed, permitted and built, concentrated outreach to all impacted communities will be required to create transparency and build partnerships for successful project implementation. In addition to engineering design for each of these components, robust finance and governance plans should be developed as early as possible. By providing this information to impacted communities, people will have the information they need to understand potential financial impacts or rate changes (for properties with existing sewer service) or adequately assess

the benefits or drawbacks of joining the new system (if they are currently unsewered). Specific suggestions for outreach and the development of finance and governance plans are provided in Sections 5 and 6 below.

Section 5: Implementation Roadmap

This section lays out a *potential* straw proposal as a roadmap for planning and construction of a regionalized approach to wastewater management in the West County based on the following components:

- Governance
- RRCSD Improvements
- Graton Community Services District (GCSD), Occidental Community Services District (OCSD), and Forestville Water District (FWD) Consolidation
- Unsewered Community Clusters

The roadmap seeks to organize actions into near term (0-5 years), mid term (5-15 years) and long term (15+ years). This organization has the twofold effect of prioritizing the most critical updates to existing infrastructure, such as upgrading the RRCSD wastewater treatment plant, in parallel with sequential planning activities.

Funding and Finance

The two-treatment hub Alternative 1(A) estimates a total lifecycle cost of \$796 million, with a large majority (\$626 million) coming from unsewered communities that convert from septic to sewer. Given the large investment estimated for complete implementation of the regionalized system, community members cite cost as a significant, if not determinative, factor for the successful implementation of a regionalized system. For example, the Monte Rio and Villa Grande Wastewater Solutions Feasibility Study estimates the total capital cost for individual OWTS for individual properties will likely exceed capital costs associated with connecting to a regionalized system, but operational costs may be significantly less.¹ It should be noted this analysis acknowledges OWTS improvements will vary depending on property-specific considerations such as slope, availability of dispersal areas, size of lots, etc. In some cases, the costs of OWTS improvements or replacement may be considerably

¹Sonoma Water (January 2026). Monte Rio and Villa Grande Wastewater Solutions Feasibility Study and Preliminary Design Report, Sonoma Water, January 2026, pp 52.

higher or lower depending on a variety of factors. Moreover, grants and public financing may not be available to individual property owners outside of legally defined entities such as special districts, community services districts, or water districts, and funding from the State Water Board is generally not available for the installation of new septic systems through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program (State Revolving Fund).

Conversely, numerous funding options at the state level may be available for a regionalized system. As part of the outreach process, staff from the State Water Board presented the potential for up to \$50 million for individual septic to sewer conversion efforts through Senate Bill 1215 in 2019 and the State Revolving Fund. These funds, administered by the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance (DFA), are available to state-designated Disadvantaged and Severely Disadvantaged Communities (DAC and SDAC, respectively). Under SB 1215, each individual DAC may be eligible for the maximum funding amount. It should be noted that virtually the entire project area identified in the Feasibility Study is classified as DAC and SDAC by the State of California Department of Water Resources. DACs are defined as census tracts with an annual median household income (MHI) that is less than 80% of the statewide annual MHI; SDAC are communities with an MHI less than 60% of the statewide average. Currently the State Water Board limits funding for each domestic residence to \$175,000. Although this amount is likely to cover *most* septic-to-sewer conversions including decommission an old septic system and connection to sewer, it should be noted that individual property owners cannot apply unless they are part of a legally defined entity.

In addition to SB 1215 funds, a number of no- and low-interest loan programs may also be available for project planning and implementation, but the exact program or funding source for each component will be defined during the planning process for each component. A list of potential funding sources is provided in Appendix B.

Planning for the ongoing costs associated with properties that undergo septic to sewer conversion present additional long-term financial challenges. Although septic to sewer investments may reduce environmental and public health risks, they could result in partial property tax reassessments that can increase annual property-related costs for homeowners and businesses. These reassessments vary by parcel and depend on the extent of improvements needed, making it difficult for communities to predict long-term financial obligations at the household level. In addition, the operations and maintenance (O&M) costs for new collection systems in formerly unsewered areas may exceed current expenditures for onsite systems, requiring careful evaluation of future rate structures and funding needs. As a result, transparent, early communication about post-conversion

costs—including taxes, rates, and assessments—will be essential for communities to make informed decisions about whether and when to pursue sewer connections.

The roadmap assumes development of specific funding and finance plans will be required for each component in the tables below.

Governance

Conversations with the Sonoma County Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCO) indicate LAFCO can be supportive of any governance structure meeting the following criteria:

- The project in question (in this case, wastewater management) is likely to achieve its stated goals (i.e., regionalized wastewater management).
- Significant public support exists for the effort.
- The governing body of the proposed system provides a legally accountable body selected by impacted members of the public.
- The governing body is not duplicative/does not create greater administrative or governance burdens than existing structures such as Community Service Districts or Water Districts.
- Evidence can be provided of a sustainable financial plan for the entity managing/operating the proposed system.

The roadmap below assumes a combination of consolidating some existing wastewater service providers and expanding the sphere of influence of others to include unsewered communities. Numerous recent examples of successful consolidation and/or expansion exist within Sonoma County, with a focus on fire district or sanitation district reorganization. A comprehensive list of recent LAFCO efforts is available online at <https://sonomalafco.org/proposals-and-projects>.

Additionally, Sonoma Water is currently involved in two consolidation efforts: The transition of the South Park County Sanitation District (South Park) to the City of Santa Rosa (city) and the transition of the Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup Sanitation Zone (ALWSZ) to the Town of Windsor (town). The consolidation of these small districts with nearby larger systems is summarized below and illustrative of the type of gradual, planned approach envisioned in the roadmap.

- South Park – Santa Rosa: Sonoma Water currently manages and operates the South Park (district), which provides sewer services for about 4,500 equivalent single family dwellings in south Santa Rosa. The district includes the Roseland area,

which in 2017 was annexed into the city. As part of the annexation process, Sonoma Water and the city negotiated a multi-year process to eventually turn over the operation and management of the South Park district to the city. The agreement was approved by LAFCO and is underway. Currently, wastewater collected in the district is sent to the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Plant operated by the city and collection system improvements are coordinated with the city. In addition, the flat annual sewer rate charged to South Park district customers is slowly being transitioned to the tiered, monthly rate structure used by the city.

- **ALWSZ – Windsor:** In 2023, the ALWSZ zone piloted a recycled water partnership with the town. In the wet season, the zone provided space for the town to store recycled water. The recycled water was returned for use in the town in the dry months. An estimated 45 million gallons of recycled water was stored by the zone and used in Windsor in 2023. This recycled water partnership used existing infrastructure and provided a stepping stone for continued partnership. In February 2024 the Windsor Water District Board of Directors took the first step toward the potential annexation of a portion of the zone by requesting that LAFCO consider an expansion of the Windsor Water District sphere of influence and annexation of a specified portion of the Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup Sanitation Zone service area. The goal of consolidation is to increase efficiency and use capacity at the town's wastewater treatment plant and to help ALWSZ eliminate the need for an estimated \$50 million in capital upgrades that would otherwise be needed to meet state compliance requirements.

Roadmap Overview

This roadmap represents one potential path forward for the implementation of a regionalized wastewater management approach based on Feasibility Study two-treatment hub Alternative 1(A). The roadmap assumes that the major physical implementation components associated with RRCSD improvement and a consolidated GCSD/OCSD/FWD can move forward independently; however, actions associated with the connection of unsewered communities are dependent on the completion of infrastructure improvements by these agencies. By creating standalone projects, the roadmap provides the flexibility for unsewered communities to join a regionalized wastewater management system as funding and public support emerge.

Roadmap color coding:

- Governance
- Finance
- Implementation²

Governance Approach

Phase 1 — Governance Near Term Actions (0-5 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Execute regionalization MOU and link it with regionalization benefits and pathogen TMDL action plan in the Russian River Watershed to establish overall program structure and implementation team	Applicable Parties	2027	2
Outreach to and prioritize clusters (high, medium and low) based on readiness and funding potential	Defined by MOU	2027	5
Explore governance pathways for development of new agencies and for potential agency consolidations*	Defined by MOU	2027	5
Individual Board actions for existing districts and County committing to regionalization strategies (Alternative 1a modified)	Applicable Parties	2029	1
Work with high-priority community clusters to define implementation strategies and governance needs	Defined by MOU, LAFCO	2031	2

* RRCSD, FWD, GCSD, and OCSD are the only governing agencies being considered for this exercise. No new governance structure is currently proposed. The agencies may expand service areas or merge with one another, which could potentially result in the formation of a new governance agency upon completion of the project. Communities that construct new collection systems could merge with existing agencies or potentially form their own governance structure.

Phase 2 — Governance Mid-Term Actions (5-15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
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² All implementation steps and associated planning include environmental permitting and planning efforts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) where required.

Expand existing districts for the connections of high-priority community clusters	Defined by MOU, LAFCO	2033	2
Work with medium-priority community clusters to define implementation strategies and governance needs	Defined by MOU, LAFCO	2036	2

Phase 3 — Governance Long Term Actions (more than 15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Expand existing districts for the connections of medium- priority community clusters	Defined by MOU, LAFCO	2038	2
Work with low-priority community clusters to define implementation strategies and governance needs	Defined by MOU, LAFCO	2043	2
Expand existing districts for the connections of low-priority community clusters	Defined by MOU, LAFCO	2045	2
Evaluate the potential benefit of a new regional district	Applicable Parties	2050	5

RRCS D Improvements

Phase 1 — RRCS D Near Term Actions (0-5 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Complete force main and lift station improvements	RRCS D	2026	4
Complete I&I study and prioritization plan for collection system improvements	RRCS D	2026	2
Complete WWTP capacity analysis to identify improvements for 5 MGD peak flow	RRCS D	2026	1
Secure funding for and design WWTP capacity and expansion improvements for 5 MGD peak flow	RRCS D	2028	3
Secure funding for collection system capacity and I&I improvements	RRCS D	2028	2

Phase 2 — RRCS D Mid-Term Actions (5-15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Design and construct highest-priority I&I improvements	RRCS D	2030	5
Construct WWTP capacity and expansion improvements for 5 MGD peak flow	RRCS D	2031	3

Complete planning for recycled water irrigation acreage expansion	RRCSD	2032	2
Coordinate Cluster 12 connection	RRCSD	2032	5
Design and construct recycled water expansion	RRCSD	2032	4
Modify NPDES permit as needed to include connection of Cluster 12	RRCSD	2035	2

Phase 3 — RRCSD Long Term Actions (more than 15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Continue implementing long-term I&I improvements	RRCSD	2041	5+
Coordinate connections of medium-priority community clusters	RRCSD	2040	5
Modify NPDES permit as needed to include medium-priority community clusters	RRCSD	2043	2
Coordinate connections of low-priority community clusters	RRCSD	2047	5+
Modify NPDES permit as needed to include low-priority community clusters collection systems	RRCSD	2050	2

GCSD-OCSD-FWD Consolidation

Phase 1 — GCSD-OCSD-FWD Near Term Actions (0-5 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Complete OCSD-GCSD pipeline design	OCSD	2025	2
Secure funding for OCSD-GCSD pipeline construction	OCSD	2026	3
Construct OCSD-GCSD pipeline project	OCSD, GCSD	2029	2
Secure funding and complete evaluation to define necessary capacity, water quality, and seasonal discharge facilities for a combined treatment facility	FWD, GCSD	2027	3
Execute MOUs and evaluate governance structure to consolidate FWD and GCSD	FWD, GCSD	2027	1
Secure funding for the design and construction of new combined treatment facilities	FWD, GCSD	2030	2

Phase 2 — GCSD-OCSD-FWD Mid-Term Actions (5-15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Execute MOU to consolidate OCSD and GCSD	OCSD, GCSD	2031	2
Design and construct combined treatment facility that can accommodate connections of high-priority community clusters	FWD, GCSD	2032	5
Obtain new NPDES permit for the combined treatment facility with connections of high-priority community clusters	FWD, GCSD	2034	2
Coordinate connections for high-priority community clusters	FWD, GCSD	2035	4

Phase 3 — GCSD-OCSD-FWD Long Term Actions (more than 15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Coordinate connections of medium-priority community clusters	FWD-GCSD	2040	5
Modify NPDES permit as needed for the connections of medium-priority community clusters	FWD-GCSD	2043	2
Coordinate connections of low-priority community clusters	FWD-GCSD	2047	5+
Modify NPDES permit as needed for the connections of low-priority community clusters	FWD-GCSD	2050	2

Unsewered Community Clusters

Phase 1 — Unsewered Community Near Term Actions (0-5 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Evaluate and identify the appropriate existing agency to serve each community cluster	All	2030	2
Secure funding for the connection of Cluster 12 (Monte Rio/Villa Grande)	RRCSD and Monte Rio/Villa Grande	2030	2
Secure funding for the connections of other high-priority community clusters collection	GCSD, OCSD and high-priority community clusters	2033	2

Phase 2 — Unsewered Community Mid-Term Actions (5-15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Design and construct connection of Cluster 12	RRCSD	2032	5
Design and construct connections of high-priority community clusters	RRCSD, FWD, GCSD, high-priority community clusters	2035	5
Secure funding for the connections of medium-priority community clusters	RRCSD, GCSD, OCSD, FWD, medium-priority community clusters	2038	2

Phase 3 — Unsewered Community Long Term Actions (more than 15 years)

Action	Lead Agency	Start Time	Duration (Years)
Design and construct connections for the medium-priority community clusters	RRCSD, GCSD, OCSD, FWD, medium-priority community clusters	2040	5
Secure funding for the connections of low-priority community clusters collection	RRCSD, GCSD, OCSD, FWD, low-priority community clusters	2045	2
Design and construct connections for low-priority community clusters	RRCSD, GCSD, OCSD, FWD, low-priority community clusters	2047	5+

Section 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The Feasibility Study (study) represents an important step toward improving wastewater management in the west Sonoma County. The study evaluated a range of alternatives and considered environmental needs, engineering feasibility, costs, regulatory requirements, and input from local agencies, stakeholders, and community members. Based on this work, a phased regional approach was identified as the preferred path forward because it

provides the greatest long-term environmental benefits while allowing improvements to occur over time.

The study found that existing public wastewater infrastructure including the RRCSD wastewater treatment plant and associated collection system, along with aging/failing septic systems in unsewered communities present growing environmental and public health challenges that require a new approach to wastewater management. Stakeholders have noted that without reliable wastewater treatment, the commercial core of Monte Rio is not sustainable, and a risk exists that new septic systems for some parcels may not be physically feasible or meet regulatory requirements as old systems increasingly require replacement.

Throughout the study, community members have expressed both support for and concerns about a new, regional system. They acknowledge that while a regionalized system will provide increased environmental benefits, significant upgrades will be needed at RRCSD to accommodate current flows as evidenced by the 2026 spill. Without substantial improvements, these issues will be exacerbated with the addition of new flows from currently unsewered areas. Additionally, community members expressed concerns about growth, preserving the unique character of Russian River communities, project costs, and ensuring that existing infrastructure is improved before additional communities are connected. These perspectives helped shape the recommended implementation strategy.

Careful investigation of these concerns at a design-level for each component in the roadmap is essential for successful implementation of a regionalized approach. Rather than proposing one large project, the recommended roadmap allows improvements to move forward in phases. As noted, major portions of this approach, such as improvements to RRCSD or linking OCSD/GCSD/FWD, can take place independently based on community support and available financing. As funding becomes available, environmental review is completed, and community support is established, improvements to existing facilities, connections between existing wastewater districts, and future service to unsewered communities—or portions of those communities, such as the Monte Rio commercial core—can each advance independently.

Each component of this regionalization road map provides substantial benefits on its own by addressing local wastewater needs to individual communities and the environment; when combined, they create a modern wastewater system capable of providing the resilience and capacity needed to address longstanding and emerging challenges and better serve residents in the West County for decades to come.

Appendix A: Background and Supporting Documents

The following documents are available online via the links below:

- [Feasibility Study Volume 1 \(Chapters 1-6\)](#)
- [Feasibility Study Volume 2 \(Chapters 7-9\)](#)
- [Feasibility Study Volume 3 \(Appendices and Technical Memorandums\)](#)
- [Stakeholder Committee Materials, including Committee meeting summaries with participant rosters, all presentations and recordings, and the Stakeholder Assessment*](#)

*Scroll down to the appropriate date for supporting materials for each Stakeholder Committee meeting. Note the Stakeholder Assessment report is included in the presentation for Meeting #1, October 22, 2024.

Appendix B: Potential Funding Sources

This resource is intended to provide a sample of the programs which may to assist with wastewater improvement and watershed protection in the West County. Is not intended as an exhaustive list, but rather a showcase of the types and funding amounts which may be available through State, federal, local, and private programs.

State sources

State Water Resources Control Board Clean Water State Revolving Fund (State Revolving Fund):

- Main California funding pathway. Provides both loans and grants.
- Grant/principal forgiveness (PF) available for projects that serve small (<20,000 people) and disadvantaged communities (median household income (MHI) of less than 80% of the statewide MHI).
- **Email:** CleanWaterSRF@waterboards.ca.gov
- **Web:** https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/septic-to-sewer-funding.html

State Water Resources Control Board Technical Assistance Funding Program:

- Technical Assistance Funding Program. Similar requirements as outlined for CWSRF grants/PF except small community is <10,000.
- Demand high, not all requests accommodated. Priority given to projects that involve:
 - Out of compliance
 - Water delivery issues
 - Drought/contamination impacted communities
- TA includes but is not limited to:
 - Coordination and development of capital improvement projects
 - Facilitation of operation and maintenance
 - Engineering and environmental analysis

- Legal assistance
- Leak detection/water audits
- Compliance audits
- Financial analysis
- Technical managerial and financial (TMF) assessments
- Board or operator training
- **Email:** DFA-TARequest@waterboards.ca.gov
- **Web:** https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/tech_asst_funding.html

California Department of Housing and Community Development

- Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)
- CDBG partners with rural cities and counties to improve the lives of their low- and moderate-income residents through the creation and expansion of community and economic development opportunities in support of livable communities.
- Eligible activities include water and wastewater systems.
- Application window closed; the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is posted in early Autumn and closes early the following year.
- **Web:** <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/funding/cdbg>

California's Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (Bank)

- Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (ISRF) Program.
- IBank's ISRF Loan Fund program provides low-cost, direct loans to local governments and nonprofits sponsored by public agencies for a wide variety of public infrastructure and economic expansion projects.
- Funds, among other things, sewage collection and treatment projects
- **Email:** infrastructureloans@ibank.ca.gov
- **Web:** <https://www.grants.ca.gov/grants/infrastructure-state-revolving-fund-isrf-program/>
- **IBank Web:** <https://ibank.ca.gov>

North Coast Resource Partnership

- NCRP Regional Water Quality Control Board Wastewater Infrastructure Technical Assistance Grant

- Grant term expired in February 2026 but this may be a source for future local support or funding.
- RFPs and solicitations posted here:
<https://www.northcoastresourcepartnershipprojects.org/ProjectCustomPage/RFPs>

Federal sources

US Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

- Federal Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program
- This program provides funding for sanitary sewage disposal and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas (rural areas and towns with populations of 10,000 or less)
- Provides long-term low-interest loans and grants when available
- Funds may be used to finance the acquisition, construction or improvement of wastewater collection, transmission, treatment, and disposal, as well as stormwater management.
- County Contacts (Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa & Sonoma)
 - Reef Atwell-Smith, Santa Rosa
 - **Email:** reef.atwellsmith@usda.gov
- Apply through RD Apply: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rd-apply>

US Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

- Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households Grant (SEARCH)
- This program helps very small (<2,500), financially distressed (defined as having a median household income below the poverty line or less than 80 percent of the statewide non-metropolitan median household income) rural communities with predevelopment feasibility studies, design and technical assistance on proposed water and waste disposal projects.
- Funds may be used for:
 - Feasibility studies to support applications for funding water or waste disposal projects
 - Preliminary design and engineering analysis
 - Technical assistance for the development of an application for financial assistance
- The application window is currently open as of August, 2026.

- For more information contact state RD Office:
 - Bryan Anguiano, State Director
 - **Email:** rd.ca.general.inquiries@usda.gov
- **Web:** <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/search-special-evaluation-assistance-rural-communities-and-households-grant>

United States Environmental Protection Agency

- Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Program
- "The Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 (WIFIA) established the WIFIA program, an EPA-operated bank that provides supplemental, flexible, low-cost credit assistance to public and private borrowers for all types of wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater projects. The WIFIA program offers long-term loans that can be combined with State Revolving Fund assistance, municipal bonds, and federal and state grants to help communities deliver more critical water infrastructure projects for a lower cost with less impact on rate payers."
- **Web:** <https://www.epa.gov/wifia/about-wifia-program>

United States Environmental Protection Agency

- EPA Community Grants
- Congress appropriates resources for specifically named community water infrastructure projects including wastewater and water quality protection.
- Requires congressional sponsorship (Jared Huffman)
- **Web:** <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/epa-community-grants-program-basics>

Private sources of funding

Private funders can provide supplemental funding to support non-infrastructure aspects of this project. Many of these only accept proposals from organizations who they invite to submit. Using existing, environmentally focused non-profits in Sonoma County might be one approach and framing the work around things such as: watershed resilience, climate adaptation, protecting disadvantaged rural communities, long-term ecological restoration, or rural environmental justice would make the work more appealing to these organization.

National Fish and Wildlife Federation

- Five Star Program
- "The Five Star Program, first launched in 1998, seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to a variety of local partnerships for wetland, forest, riparian and coastal habitat restoration, stormwater management, outreach and stewardship."
- While this won't fund the construction of sewer lines it may provide supplemental support for river protection.
- RFPs released in later winter, due the following June
- Email:
 - Sydney Godbey, Director, National Programs: Sydney.Godbey@nfwf.org
 - Ericka Popovich, Manager, National Programs: Ericka.Popovich@nfwf.org
 - Zoey Apelt, Coordinator, Regional Programs: Zoey.Apelt@nfwf.org
- **Web:** <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/five-star-program>

Rose Foundation

- California Watershed Protection Fund
- The California Watershed Protection Fund supports projects designed to improve water quality and protect watersheds across California.
- Watershed eligibility changes year to year. Check the list of eligible watersheds in CA before applying.
- There are two application periods per year, in the spring and fall
- While not for infrastructure, this grant may be used to for watershed protection, monitoring, stewardship work, etc.

- **Web:** <https://rosefdn.org/environmental-grants/california-watershed-protection-fund/>

Community Foundation Sonoma County

- Grant Programs - Sonoma County Resilience Fund
- Grant programs support community partners in addressing Sonoma County's most pressing local challenges.
- While this won't support the construction of a sewer system, it could provide supplemental funding to a non-profit doing work to support river/ecosystem health. Framing need around climate change would be a good approach.
- **Contacts:**
 - Annette Williams, Community Impact Associate
 - Email: awilliams@sonomacf.org
 - Phone: 707.303.9639
 - Amy Holter, Vice President for Community Impact
 - Email: aholter@sonomacf.org
 - Phone: 707.303.9621
 - José Castro Gambino, Senior Community Impact Officer
 - Email: jcastro@sonomacf.org
 - Phone: 707.360.6140
- **Web:** <https://www.sonomacf.org/nonprofits/apply-for-grants/>

Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)

- Technical Assistance for Water, Wastewater & Solid Waste
- RCAC assists rural communities to build, improve, manage, operate, or finance drinking water and wastewater systems.
- This organization can provide support, including grant and loan support, for the project. RCAC helps rural communities build, improve, manage, operate, and/or finance wastewater systems.
- **Web:** <https://www.rcac.org/environmental/water-wastewater-solidwaste/>
- Phone: (916) 447-2854

Appendix C: Community Survey Results

Which of the following best describes you? (Select all that apply)

The table below summarizes respondent characteristics. Respondents could select more than one role; therefore, percentages do not total 100%.

Which best describes you? (n=19)	Count	Percent
Property owner	16	84%
Resident	15	79%
Owner of a property that uses a septic system	11	58%
Sewer district customer	5	26%
Other (please specify)	4	21%
Community organization representative	3	16%
Business owner	2	11%

Other (please specify):

- Lower Russian River Community Advisory Group (CAG)
- Water District Board member

Which community are you most closely associated with?

Respondent's Community	Count
Monte Rio	7
Villa Grande	3
Rio Nido	2
Graton currently served by Graton Community Services District	2
Graton not served by Graton Community Services District	1
Camp Meeker	1
Occidental not served by Occidental County Sanitation District	1
Guerneville currently served by Russian River County Sanitation District	1
Other (please specify)	1

Other (please specify):

Respondent did not fill out the text box

If you currently use a septic system, how likely is it that you would choose to connect to a sewer system?

The table below shows how likely respondents with septic systems said they would be to connect to a sewer system.

Likelihood of connecting to a sewer system (n=11)	Percent
Extremely unlikely	36%
Somewhat likely	27%
Neither likely nor unlikely	27%
Extremely likely	9%

Did you attend the June 17 community workshop?

Attended June 17 Workshop (n=19)	Percent
No	58%
Yes	42%

As you think about the future of wastewater infrastructure in West County, how high of a priority is each of the following to you?

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who rated each item as a high or top priority, along with the percentage who ranked it among their top three priorities. The rating question identifies issues that were broadly important, while the ranking exercise highlights which priorities rose to the top when respondents had to choose among competing priorities.

Future Priorities (n=14)	High/Top Priority	Ranked in Top 3
Maintaining affordable wastewater costs for residents and businesses	93%	33%
Accessing outside funding to reduce local costs (n=13)	92%	42%
Protecting the Russian River and local waterways	86%	50%
Protecting the character of local communities	86%	25%
Supporting environmental health and ecosystem protection	86%	17%
Preventing sewage overflows and spills	79%	50%
Providing reliable wastewater service	79%	33%
Protecting public health	79%	8%
Preparing for future environmental and climate-related challenges	71%	8%
Supporting the long-term vitality of West County communities	71%	8%
Expanding wastewater service to properties that currently rely on septic systems	36%	17%
Providing infrastructure needed to support growth	36%	8%

Of the priorities you selected, which is the single most important and why? (Open-Ended)

Respondents consistently emphasized protecting the Russian River and the surrounding ecosystem as the project's highest priority, with many viewing environmental protection as the foundation for achieving other community goals. Several respondents stressed the importance of pursuing affordable, creative, and nature-based solutions that protect water quality without creating financial hardship for residents, particularly those on fixed incomes or maintaining existing septic systems.

- Expanding service to unsewered communities, particularly if it involves on-site improvements and a septic management district as options.
- Supporting environmental health and ecosystem protection. If you do this, many of the other issues will fall into place, including reasonable growth and community vitality. Sometimes it's a matter of educating the public as to why this is important and allows them to see that protecting the environment and allowing growth, don't need to be in opposition to one another.
- These priorities are misleading and reflect bias in the survey creator. My priority is to maintain my septic in good working order.
- To me, Protecting the Russian River and Local Waterways and Supporting Environmental Health and Ecosystem Protection are one and the same. If these two things are top priority, and we are able to do these things working in conjunction with nature, instead of against it, the potential of experiencing a thriving ecosystem that the human population can thrive as well, can be achieved with creative solutions that cost less money. Don't laugh! We should be able to come up with something better, that is why I am encouraging my kid to study Environmental studies and urban planning.
- Protecting the Russian River and local waterways is the most important issue to me. There are a lot of things affecting the river in addition to the septic issue (e.g. agriculture, gravel mining, development, increased demand for water, sewer systems that are already over capacity, etc. The lower river communities have become the target though there a lot of problems up stream.
- Owners of OWTS receive NO financial assistance for maintenance and improvements to their onsite systems. Even if connection is ultimately made to a public sewer system, there needs to be financial assistance to OWTS owners in the interim.
- They are all interconnected but keeping the Russian River waterways healthy is the central concern because the community is built around the river and that is why we are here.
- Protect river
- Protecting our waterways without making it impossible for people on fixed living to keep their homes
- protecting water ways as the Russian river is vital to the character and economic vitality of the region.
- High sewer rates are absolutely killing Occidental. We have to get those rights down.
- Reliability would prevent illegal discharges, reduce fines, limit unexpected repair expenses.
- #1-If you accomplish this one, accomplishing several others will follow. If you protect the smallest critters, you will protect the others as well.

Are there other priorities that should be considered but were not listed above?

Several respondents identified additional considerations beyond those listed in the survey, particularly the need for stronger public engagement and clear evidence demonstrating the need for wastewater improvements and their benefits. Others emphasized that wastewater

planning should be coordinated with broader watershed and infrastructure issues, including fish habitat, water supply, wildfire risk, transportation, and existing sewer system capacity. A few respondents also expressed concern about expanding the scope of the project before addressing problems with existing wastewater infrastructure.

- Convincing the public that there's a cost benefit for some kind of conversion. Also, there are many that don't believe there are any health issues with the River, and if they are, there's no data that shows that septic are the primary contributor. There's a big public engagement aspect to all of this
- The general topics listed are assumed to include many of the other issues listed and unlisted ones as well.
- Our Board of Supervisors voted to remove the Potter Dam which is going to cause the Russian River to run dry at some point. How does this group of officials plan on maintaining a viable sewer system with no water in the river?
- Restore fish habitat. Figure out a way to let the sand bar form at the mouth to provide an estuary for young fish e.g. pump out water so Jenner doesn't flood??
- If sewer construction facilitates growth, then there needs to be assessment of increased risk from fires and there needs to be improvements to other infrastructure including roads and water systems.
- I listed growth because I hear stories about existing homes that cannot get permits for septic and local business that would be open if not for the septic system issues.
- No
- Spills keep happening further up the watershed, making many of the top priorities around protecting environment, ecosystems and health moot
- Fix RRCSD before adding burden to a failing system. Also, the drive to expand into "un-sewered" communities along a pipeline route is making the project larger (costly) than necessary.

How concerned are you about each of the following issues?

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who rated each item as a high or top priority, along with the percentage who ranked it among their top three priorities. The rating question identifies issues that were broadly important, while the ranking exercise highlights which priorities rose to the top when respondents had to choose among competing priorities.

Community Concerns (n=14)	Very/Extremely Concerned	Ranked in Top 3
Lack of transparency in decision-making	79%	36%
Overall affordability (n=13)	77%	55%
Increased monthly wastewater costs	64%	18%
Uncertainty about future costs	64%	0%
Project complexity and implementation challenges	57%	36%
Potential impacts on community character	57%	27%
Uncertainty about future governance structures	57%	18%
Connection or infrastructure costs for property owners currently using septic systems	50%	45%
Potential requirements for septic system owners	50%	36%
Loss of local control over decision-making	43%	18%
Fairness across communities	36%	9%
Potential impacts on businesses during construction	36%	0%
Traffic, noise, and other disruptions during construction	29%	0%
Potential impacts on renters	21%	0%

Which concern stands out as most important to you? Please explain. Do you have any ideas about how it might be addressed?

Affordability emerged as the dominant concern, with many respondents expressing worry that connection costs and ongoing sewer service fees could create financial hardship, particularly for residents on fixed incomes. Several respondents also questioned whether a centralized sewer system is the most appropriate solution, citing concerns about project complexity, local conditions, governance, system reliability, and the potential for large-scale sewer failures. Some suggested that greater state funding, improvements to existing sewer infrastructure, or continued investment in septic system upgrades should be considered before expanding wastewater systems.

- My belief is that safe effective and affordable disposal of wastewater a government responsibility and yet the costs penalties and solutions seem to be pointing directly to property owners as the source for funding. I think the only solution here is some kind of statewide funding pot beyond the current Potts identified. It needs to become a priority for the state legislature and the governor's office and yet they act like they don't know anything about it and the SRF is the only place to go.
- Project complexity and implementation challenges. This is mostly true for the lower RR and not so much for the Graton-Forestville area. Governance structures may be fraught with issues too lengthy to go into now. One issue: limited possibilities that can be easily resolved, especially in lower river area where we have a river plain, hillsides that erode easily, liquified soils, narrow roadways, floods, many, many big trees and a very sensitive environment.
- Our community does not have the economies of scale to reasonably implement a public sewer system. The community has made our position VERY clear. And yet, the Board of Supervisors and their proxies continue to push this issue.
- In the 1990's they were going to build a sewage treatment plant in Sheridan Meadow. It was "approved" by the "voters" or maybe "parcel owners", as I recall. Nothing ever happened. My understanding is that it became too expensive. I attended the Brelje Race led meetings about the sewer feasibility study. It sounded like the project would be incredibly expensive. It was unclear how it would be funded. It seems like septic upgrades and new technology would be more affordable.
- Many local residents rely on Social Security or have fixed retirement income. They should not be forced out of their homes by project costs.
- Costs and requirements for septic system connection when the septic system is working fine.
- The survey language speaks of "maintaining" affordability, as if things are currently affordable. They are not. Not an Occidental. High sewer rights are killing the town. I do not understand why the county charges such high rates and the only idea I have is make them stop. But I don't know how to do that.
- Guerneville has been suffering with the RRCSD for decades. Primary focus must be on restoring RRCSD before branching out to solve other communities sanitation woes.
- Affordability and loss of control or need for say in management of central sewer system. I also care about environment. An occasional failing septic system does far less damage than a big spill from a central sewer and there have been a lot of them.

Are there other concerns that should be considered but were not listed above?

Several respondents emphasized the importance of taking a comprehensive, long-term approach to wastewater planning rather than implementing incremental solutions. Others expressed concern that local decision-makers were not adequately considering community input or addressing longstanding issues with existing wastewater systems, particularly the Russian River County Sanitation District. A few respondents also highlighted the need to better integrate wastewater improvements with broader infrastructure planning and governance.

- I need a comprehensive approach not a bunch of Band-Aids. Also, for at least half of the options presented in one a modified, the Guerneville plant first needs significant improvements, even if it sells its current problems with the current Grant funded work. The recent spell destroyed any community confidence in the ability of the Guerneville plant to handle its own wastewater processing needs much less expand its service area.
- Probably, but I can't think of them right now.
- Local government is not listening to the citizens of the Lower River who do not want this system. Pay attention to the community rather than forcing an uninvited narrative onto people who do not want it.
- Decisions must be made macroscopically. Improvements to one part of our infrastructure must be considered together with other needed improvements.
- RRCSD ratepayers have difficulty influencing decision makers and depend upon regulators (RWQCB) to bring change or move the needle on issues. We feel powerless influencing the Directors.

If you own property served by a septic system, which concerns are most important to you? (Select up to 3)

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who selected each concern as one of their top three concerns.

Septic System Concerns (n=9)	Percent
Cost of connecting to a wastewater system	89%
Ongoing wastewater service costs	44%
Uncertainty about future requirements	44%
Loss of control over my current wastewater system	33%
Timing of required improvements	22%
Other (please specify)	22%
Construction or disruption on my property	11%
Fairness compared to current sewer customers	11%
Potential impacts on property value	11%

Other (please specify):

- Increased property taxes and an end run around prop 13 protections.

Are there specific actions that could help address these concerns?

Respondents most frequently called for greater financial assistance and consideration of alternatives to mandatory sewer connections, including continued investment in improving and maintaining septic systems. Several respondents emphasized the need for clearer, more proactive communication about proposed wastewater solutions, including their potential costs, impacts, and implications for property owners. Others stressed that project leaders must demonstrate the value of any proposed sewer system by addressing concerns about affordability, system reliability, and community support before moving forward.

- The state and the county should consider and create options to make the necessary system improvements whatever they are. It also seems to me that helping people with their septic systems could and should be a state priority rather than focusing solely on septic to sewer. This study as well as the MRVG study both point to the exorbitant relative costs septic improvement to sewer connection that is I assume an arbitrary decision by the state board or someone and we should work to change that perception, perhaps using the data collected from these two studies and any other information that we can gather septic solutions are evolving quite quickly, and Sonoma County is slow to adopt. We should really be focusing on those things as options again particularly because of the exorbitant cost of sewer connection and it's ongoing operational and maintenance costs which are much lower for septic, even enhanced high-end systems. Don't come close to the annual sewer cost others are paying.

- Stop forcing a public sewer system on communities who do not want it. Especially considering the disaster that goes on with the sewer system in Guerneville.
- How do us poor people afford these costs?
- Will assessed valuation of our property be increased due to a sewer connection.
- yes, I think Sonoma Water should put out an email or a blog post or some communication specifically to property owners with septic systems, telling them about the ramifications of whatever solutions are being proposed. I even attended the June meeting and walked away without realizing that the proposed solutions might require me to be hooked up to a sewer. We just spent \$100,000 on a new septic system. We love the independence of being on septic. A public awareness campaign is needed.
- Guerneville's rates were in the hundreds, now near 3,000. My septic property annual sanitation cost is less than 1/10th my sewer home. Convince "us" switching to sewer would be a good decision.

How high of a priority should each of the following be as the project moves forward?

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who rated each item as a high or top priority as the project moves forward.

Priorities as project moves forward (n=12)	Rated High/Top Priority
Clear information about project costs	92%
Protection against unreasonable rate increases	92%
Transparency about decision-making	83%
Regular communication with community members	75%
Opportunities for meaningful public input	75%
Local representation in governance and oversight	75%
Clear explanations of project benefits and tradeoffs	75%
Independent oversight and accountability	67%
Demonstrated protection of the Russian River and local waterways	67%
Environmental monitoring and reporting	58%
Equitable treatment of sewered and unsewered properties (n=11)	55%

What specific actions could project leaders take to demonstrate that community needs, concerns, and priorities are being considered as this project moves forward?

Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of meaningful, ongoing community engagement throughout the project. Suggested actions included providing regular opportunities for two-way communication, improving public access to clear and timely information, and creating formal mechanisms, such as citizen advisory groups, for community members to provide ongoing input. Several respondents also encouraged project leaders to consider a broader range of alternatives and ensure that community perspectives meaningfully influence project decisions.

- There needs to be an overall plan and vision for the entire watershed, particularly in this area of waste water and how it's handled. There are multiple studies that have gone on and continue to go on that look at a piece of the elephant from the perspective of the funding source. I would suggest that the project leaders take a closer look at many of the attendant studies that are being undertaken or have been undertaken, and look beyond state direction as the driver for the solutions.
- Have knowledgeable employee on call at announced times to answer questions from the public on a regular basis. (for instance 3 hours week on-going) Periodic community meeting (every 3-4 months would be reasonable) Provide written materials that explain main issues and resolution options and allow some community weigh-in.

- This project should be put to a referendum. It is clear that the local community doesn't want it.
- Perhaps provide options instead of a mandatory imposition of a new system.
- more effort to communicate with the Public
- Public forums, OPEN, not regulated (breaking groups into small tables), Two-way communication. A citizen panel of interested property owners who are ambassadors? Please, NOT the MAC Committee process.
- Set up citizens' committee of interested citizens that can give regular input to managers and planners. It should be made up of people who have high interest willing to read documents and give input on some of the details and also represent the needs of the community. it should be focused on the wastewater and environmental issues and not a bunch of other issues.

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How concerned are you about potential increases in costs related to wastewater service?

The table below shows respondents' level of concern about potential increases in wastewater service costs.

Concern about potential wastewater cost increases (n=12)	Percent
Extremely Concerned	33%
Very Concerned	42%
Moderately Concerned	17%
Slightly Concerned	8%
Not Concerned	0%

In addition to pursuing federal and state grants and low-interest loans to help pay for project costs, which of the following opportunities should also be considered? Drag the items up or down to rank them from highest priority (top) to lowest priority (bottom).

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who ranked each funding opportunity as their highest priority.

Funding Approach Priorities (n=9)	Percent Ranked 1st
Bond funded by a west county property tax increase, for all property owners in the project area	44%
Bond funded by sales tax increase in unincorporated west county communities within the project area	33%
Incremental and predictable increases in sanitation district rates over time	22%
A special capital-improvement temporary rate increase for sanitation district customers	0%

If future wastewater improvements result in additional costs to ratepayers, which outcomes would be most important for those investments to achieve? Drag up to five items into the box on the right and arrange them from most important (top) to least important (bottom).

Respondents were asked to prioritize the outcomes they would most want future wastewater investments to achieve if those improvements resulted in additional costs. The table below shows the percentage of respondents who ranked each outcome among their top three priorities.

Desired Investment Outcomes (n=9)	Ranked in Top 3
Preventing sewage overflows and spills	67%
Protecting the character of local communities	44%
Protecting the Russian River and local waterways	33%
Providing more reliable wastewater service	33%
Improving emergency preparedness and system resilience	33%
Improving environmental resilience in a changing climate	22%
Reducing long-term maintenance needs	22%
Improving public health	11%
Expanding service to currently unsewered properties	11%
Other (please describe)	11%
Supporting future community needs and opportunities	0%

Looking at the outcomes you selected, which is most important and why?

Respondents most frequently identified preventing sewage overflows and improving system reliability as the highest priorities, viewing these outcomes as foundational to protecting the Russian River and the surrounding environment. Several respondents emphasized that existing wastewater infrastructure should be repaired and operating reliably before expanding service to additional communities. Others also expressed concern about project affordability, suggesting that broader public funding should be considered to reduce the financial burden on local property owners.

- We need solutions for the unsewered communities in order for that to happen Significant province to the Guerneville plant need to happen first. In the prior section the force choice all encompassing in terms of options and when you boil them down, they all boil down to the individual property owners in the area., When there is an overall benefit to the county, to the river areas etc. as a primary tourist, destination, what options exist to extend a portion of the costs to that population? As the River area brings people to the county as a whole, what dollars from the county has a hole should

go to this effort and others that I'm sure are underway. Please meal planning and putting additional costs on homeowners in this current economic environment will never get the approvals you're looking for. So how do we plan for status quo?

- preventing spills which directly and unequivocally impact the river directly developing resilience in a changing environment in terms of global warming in the long term, these would have the greatest impact on the whole environment also, individual property issues are often resolved if you fix the main problem
- Fix what we have already instead of trying to add more volume to an already overburdened system.
- No more sewage overflows into the river. It is inappropriate to connect unsewered communities to RRCSD until ALL needed corrections are made to the system.
- Reliability. Please fix OUR system, keep it within the pipes.
- Preventing sewage overflows and spills because that will solve several of the other issues. Maintenance and preventing major spills go a very long way in protecting the environment. What's the sense of having people get rid of functioning septic systems if the central sewer system isn't working properly?

Under what circumstances would you be most likely to consider transitioning from a septic system to a sewer system? Please select up to three.

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who selected each concern as one of their top three concerns.

Circumstances for considering transition from septic to sewer (select up to 3) (n=7)	Percent
If most or all connection costs were covered by grants	57%
If my septic system was at risk of failure	57%
If transitioning would help protect the Russian River and local waterways	43%
I would not consider transitioning under any circumstances	29%
If transitioning would improve reliability and reduce maintenance responsibilities	29%
If monthly sewer service costs were affordable	29%
If necessary in order to further develop my parcel	14%
If low-interest financing were available	0%
If there were clear information about costs and benefits	0%

Of the circumstances you selected, which would be most important in your decision and why?

Affordability emerged as the primary factor influencing respondents' willingness to transition from septic to sewer, with several expressing concern about both upfront connection costs and ongoing sewer service fees. Many respondents also indicated they would only consider connecting if their existing septic system failed, while others questioned whether septic systems are a significant enough contributor to water quality issues to justify mandatory conversion. Several responses reflected a broader desire for stronger public support and clearer justification for transitioning to a centralized sewer system.

- In order for this to happen broad public Will needs to be generated to support it. There seems to be this presumption that a low interest loan is OK. It ius not. A loan and becomes a liability for the homeowner. Also, all or most in the first sentence is, disingenuous. They are -subjective
- I do not see the need for a public sewer system when septic systems work just fine for our small rural community. This is a solution in search of a problem.
- I guess I'm not convinced that septic systems are the most deleterious factor in the river's health. Seems like a red herring to me.
- Cost
- I would only connect if my system was failing. Otherwise, operating costs are far out of market, Add connection costs, resulting in WHY would we do this.

What appeals to you most about the possibility of improving wastewater infrastructure in West County?

Respondents most frequently cited protecting water quality, the Russian River, and public health as the primary benefits of improving wastewater infrastructure. Others highlighted the potential for improved system reliability, efficiency, and cost savings, while emphasizing that improvements should remain affordable and avoid placing undue financial burdens on residents.

- I believe we can collectively need improved infrastructure, particularly in light of evolving state and county regulation.
- Greater river protection results in better health for humans and all species. Wildlife lost (particularly fish in regards to river) is seldom addressed. Chemicals and pharmaceuticals are seldom addressed, but if you get rid of the spills, you also solve other problems at the same time. Clean water needs for all life is essential.
- New leadership
- Efficiency and money savings for users.
- I'm all for improving wastewater infrastructure if it can be paid for without impacting me personally too heavily. I'm NOT convinced that sewer hookups are the best answer.
- Improved water quality
- I don't like being on septic.
- Reducing illegal discharges, controlling costs, limiting fines, keeping the system operational.
- It's a critical need for protecting environment and human health, especially when there is a focus on expanding housing which exacerbates the problems.

What concerns you most about this effort?

Respondents most frequently expressed concern about project affordability, particularly the financial impacts on homeowners, businesses, and ratepayers. Other concerns included confidence in project leadership and governance, coordination with broader infrastructure planning, and balancing infrastructure improvements with protecting the character and natural environment of West County.

- Cost to the individual, a piecemeal approach, a decisions or direction being determined by people aren't affected by this kind of thing. On the cost side, there seemed to be many things that are being explored as 'solutions' are not that viable new taxes, adding people to the rate pairs that are currently not doing anything, but maintaining their own systems and pumping periodically, low interest, loans, etc. again put the responsibility on the landowner, not the county
- There are too many questions in this survey and calibration of responses is therefore questionable. Also, the timing and length of this presentation was not good.
- People need better understanding of the relationship between a clean environment and health in relation to wastewater. They don't understand that there are more and more

unregulated and regulated toxins in our sewage that cause cancer and many other problems. Species are dying and too many people are getting cancer and other diseases at an early age. Child cancer is becoming rampant, etc.

- The effort seems to be coming from Lynda Hopkins with little to no support from the community. Additionally, the track record of the Guerneville sewer system is testimony of why this will not benefit the people of the Lower River.
- That it will cost more money
- The efficacy and the cost.
- There needs to be coordination with County planners, the water district and the County Public Infrastructure Department to address issues relating to growth and impacts to local infrastructure
- Will this actually happen?
- Costs to local business owners
- Finances, Current system is a financial burden for ratepayers. As a landlord, I pass along rate increases to tenants. Burden for them too. Near 9% annual rate increases, no end in sight. Our governance continues to blindly approve increases. I fear more, or expanding, this under-representation.
- Stimulating growth in a natural environment, especially if with typical urban design.

Is there anything else you would like decision-makers to understand as they consider future wastewater infrastructure investments?

Respondents encouraged decision-makers to take a comprehensive, countywide approach to wastewater planning while continuing to support and improve existing septic systems where appropriate. Several emphasized the importance of minimizing costs to residents, pursuing financial assistance for septic improvements, and considering lower-cost, lower-impact solutions that protect waterways without encouraging unnecessary infrastructure expansion.

- I think the county needs an overall approach, with a support and management entity that spans the county and is in place to help people in particular with improving septic, and create a priority for resource generation at the county and state level.
- Look at mutual septic system options by approaching and understanding owners in specific neighborhoods that may be cooperative for these efforts for their neighbors, the community and themselves.
- Yes, the shorter the pipeline, the lower the cost and the less impact of breakdowns on all aspects of maintaining a well run system. We are glad that RRCSD is not being hooked to Graton and Forestville and other even more distant communities. We are very happy you are dropping consideration of hooking systems up to distant communities because of high costs.
- Implement a monitoring program for septic users. Provide a grant program to families who may require septic system upgrades and/or replacement. Stop wasting taxpayer money such as hiring a sewer contractor to tell us we need a public sewer system.

- Please remember that many people are barely able to afford owning their homes as it is. Increasing costs are scary.
- Do not force people out of their
- It would help to limit development along waterways and have larger setbacks.

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