



**Sonoma
Water**

SPRING 2026 NEWS

Vol. 14, Issue #1

Occidental Sanitation

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Occidental County Sanitation District Graton Sewer Transfer Pipeline

Occidental County Sanitation District (OCSD) and Graton Community Services District (Graton) both have sewer service charges which are among the highest rates in California due to the cost associated with operating a small wastewater system in areas with stringent wastewater treatment requirements. OCSD is currently hauling wastewater from an Occidental lift station to the Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup Sanitation Zone (ALWSZ) treatment plant.

In 2021 OCSD and Graton conducted a feasibility study to assess transporting untreated wastewater from OCSD to Graton for treatment and disposal, to assess the capacity of the Graton wastewater treatment plant to treat and dispose of the total combined flow, and to construct a pipeline from OCSD to Graton to reduce costs and provide Graton with additional income necessary to prevent significant rate increases in the near future.

Thanks to the efforts of U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, in May 2025, OCSD secured a \$1.45 million grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the Occidental County Sanitation District Pipeline Design project to provide more efficient water quality management for the communities of Occidental, Graton and surrounding areas. The project will include 90% pipeline design and environmental analysis. OCSD executed the consultant agreement in early October, and the environmental compliance documentation and substantial design plans are anticipated to be completed by December 2026. OCSD will be seeking State Revolving Funds for final design and pipeline construction.

Learn more at SonomaWater.org/OCSDPipeline.



Sanitation Rate Relief Program

Save money on your annual sewer service bill

The Sanitation Rate Relief Program provides a discount on sewer service bills for low-income property owners within the districts and zones managed by Sonoma Water.

The discounts can reduce the annual sewage charge on your property tax bill by up to 50%. Nonprofit organizations that provide housing for low-income renters within the district or zone are eligible to participate in the program.

Sonoma Water will begin accepting applications from April 16 to July 10.

Customers must apply every year for the Sanitation Rate Relief Program.

Participants in the PG&E CARE Program must submit a copy of their most recent PG&E bill as proof of participation in the CARE Program. Eligible customers should sign up for the PG&E CARE Program as soon as possible to facilitate qualification for the Sanitation Rate Relief Program.

Learn more and apply at SonomaWater.org/SRRP.



Water Rebates in Your District

Water-Saving rebate programs available

As a sanitation customer, you have some water-saving tools at your fingertips! Please take advantage of the following water-saving programs offered on a first-come, first-served basis while funding is available.

Front Load High-Efficiency Clothes Washer Rebate: Receive up to \$125 back on the purchase and installation of a new, qualifying high-efficiency clothes washer. Rebates are available for all CEE Tier 2 & Advanced Tier listed clothes washers except those containing silver ion technology.

High-Efficiency Toilet Rebate: Get up to \$150 back on the purchase and installation of each new, qualifying high-efficiency toilet from the List of Qualifying Models.

Download rebate application forms and learn more at SonomaWater.org/Sanitation-Rebates or call (707) 547-1918.



Fats, Oils, and Grease (F.O.G.s) Cause Clogs

Prevent clogs and protect your plumbing!

Wipe before washing: For plates and pans with residual grease or oil, use a paper towel to wipe them clean before washing. Place the greasy paper towels, napkins, and food scraps in the compost bin.

Dispose of larger amounts responsibly: If you have more than a little oil (but less than 2 cups), let it cool, then carefully discard it in your garbage.

For More information, please visit: SonomaWater.org/PollutionPrevention.

Maintaining and Repairing Aging Infrastructure

Since 1995, Sonoma Water has been dedicated to managing eight vital wastewater districts and zones across Sonoma County. Many of the systems have served the community for decades, ranging from 43 years in areas like Russian River to over 70 years in Sonoma Valley and Occidental.

The challenge of aging systems as our collection and treatment infrastructure ages, the need for continuous maintenance and periodic replacement becomes more critical. At the same time, we must navigate increasingly strict water quality regulations, which continue to drive up both operational and capital compliance costs. Because many of the districts are small, these rising expenses are shared among a limited number of ratepayers, intensifying the financial impact on each customer.

Balancing needs and affordability while proposed rate increases for the districts are higher than in the recent past, these adjustments are essential. They allow us to:

- Maintain and replace critical aging infrastructure.
- Address deferred maintenance to prevent more costly repairs in the future.
- Protect public health and the environment through responsible system management.

Sonoma Water is sensitive to the financial strain these increases may cause. To help offset capital project costs and reduce the burden on ratepayers, we are actively pursuing grants and loans.

In the sections below, you will find specific details regarding the proposed rate increase for your district or zone. We have also included a clear breakdown of how funds are collected and allocated, along with a list of planned infrastructure projects for the upcoming year.

	FY25-26	FY26-27 Proposed
ESDs	273	273
Annual Rate per ESD	\$3,146	\$3,294
Annual Increase	\$140	\$148
Monthly Rate per ESD	\$262.17	\$274.50
Monthly Increase	\$11.67	\$12.33
Rate Increase	4.7%	4.7%
Increased Revenue	\$38,220	\$40,460

*Fixed Rate sewer bills are calculated based on usage of an Equivalent Standard Dwelling (“ESD”). An ESD is defined as what an average single family home would use in a given year.

Budget Approval

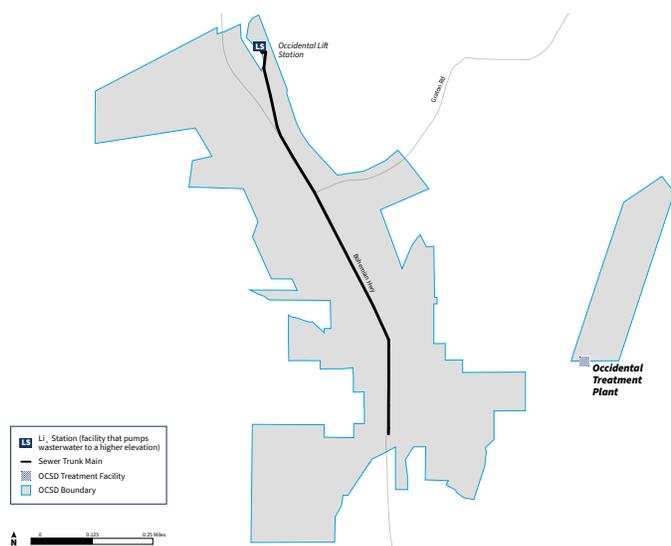
The draft proposed budgets for all sanitation districts and zones are available for review now at Sonoma Water’s office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California 95403, and on Sonoma Water’s website at [SonomaWater.org/Current-Budget](https://www.SonomaWater.org/Current-Budget).

In addition, owners of the properties in districts and zones receive notice of the proposed rates in this newsletter. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, which this year are scheduled for May 12, 2026 at the Board of Supervisors chambers. (A protest form and rate hearing information are available on pages 5-7 of this notice).

About Your District

In 1995, Sonoma Water assumed responsibility from the County of Sonoma for managing the county sanitation zones and districts, including your district.

The district began operations in 1950. Currently, it serves 273 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings within a 55-acre service area. The sanitation facility trucks all wastewater to the Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup Treatment Plant.



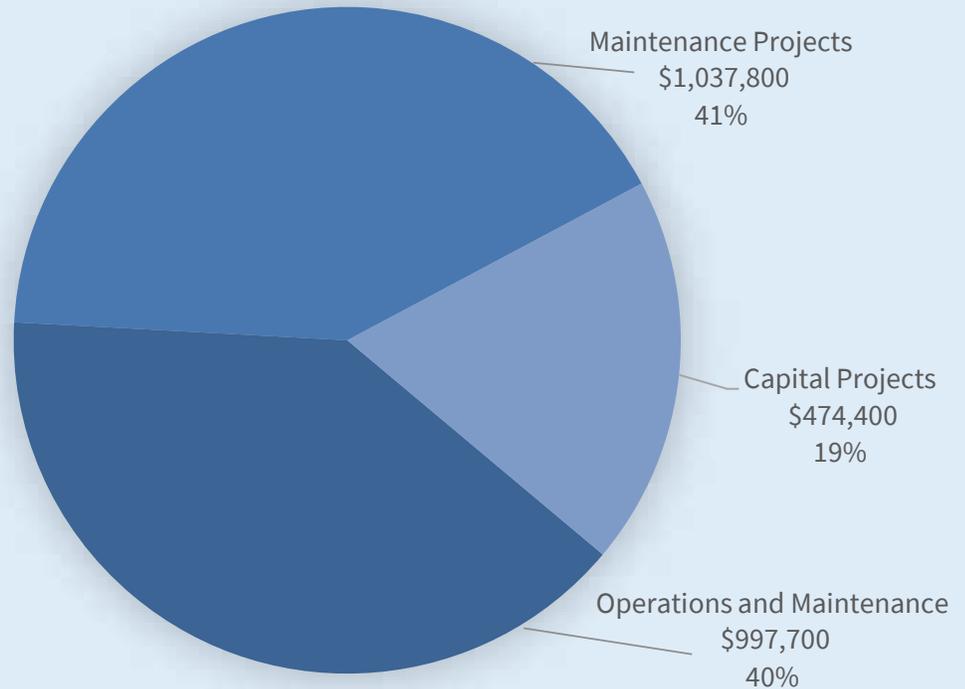
FY26-27 Budgeted Expenditures - \$2,509,900

Capital Projects – \$474,400

- Occidental - Graton Pipeline Design and Right of Way

Maintenance Projects – \$1,037,800

- Collection System Inspection, Rehabilitation, and Repairs, and Smart lid manhole monitoring
- Hazardous Materials Assistance
- Lift Station Pump Replacement
- Master Planning (Sanitary Sewer Mgmt Plan & System Evaluation and Capacity Assurance Plan (SECAP) Analysis)
- Mechanical Maintenance & Electrical/Instrumentation Equipment
- Pavement Preservation - Sonoma Public Infrastructure
- Sewer Inspection Data Management & Analysis Services
- Sewer System Management Plan (SSMP) Update
- Vegetation Management Services
- Wet Weather Hauling Services



West County Sanitation Regionalization Study

As a result of sewer spills that occurred during large storms in 2019, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board issued an order requiring the Russian River County Sanitation District to conduct a feasibility study of West County sanitation options. A major component of the West County Water Quality and Recycled Water Supply Feasibility Study with Stakeholder Committee Project (project) is the formation of a stakeholder committee to better understand community issues and concerns associated with waste management and treatment in western Sonoma County.

One approach that has been discussed to address these issues is the concept of “regionalization.” Regionalization could include things like connections between smaller systems (such as the Occidental County Sanitation District to Graton Community Service District Wastewater Transfer Pipeline) or consolidation of multiple smaller systems to create a larger customer base. This could create greater efficiency and lead to more standardized wastewater treatment throughout the project area. To learn more about the Draft Feasibility Study Report and the public stakeholder committee meetings, go to SonomaWater.org/WestCountyStudy.

PROPOSITION 218

Occidental County Sanitation District

Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Proposed Sewer Service Rate Increase

Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On May 12, 2026 at 10:05 a.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Occidental County Sanitation District (District) will conduct a public hearing to consider increasing the annual sewer service charge (Sewer Charge) to be collected on account of sewage collection and treatment services provided by the sewer system of the District to property within the District. If approved, the increased Sewer Charge and rate structure modifications will become effective on July 1, 2026.

The public hearing will be held in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California. The Board is currently not having virtual meetings with virtual participation from the public. If a virtual meeting is required by unforeseen emergency circumstances, or if virtual participation will be implemented, information regarding virtual participation will be available on the Board's agenda 72 hours prior to the meeting at <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

The Sewer Charge will be imposed on each parcel with one or more structures that are connected to the system. The Sewer Charge will be collected on the general property tax bill administered by Sonoma County. Payment of the Sewer Charge will be the responsibility of the owner of the parcel.

Reasons for the Sewer Charge and Use of the Funds Collected

The Sewer Charge is imposed to pay for the cost of providing safe and reliable sewer service to your property in conformance with legal requirements, and is necessary: (a) to finance the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the system; (b) to pay the capital replacement program costs of the system, which provides for the long-term replacement of system facilities as they wear out; and (c) to maintain sufficient reserves.

Sewer Rate Increase

Effective July 1, 2026, the District proposes to increase the Sewer Charge to \$3,294 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an annual increase of \$148 or \$12.33 per month. A standard single-family home constitutes one ESD. Parcels with other uses (for example, apartments and commercial buildings) will be assigned a number of ESDs using standard equivalency factors that estimate the probable quantity and quality of sewage effluent normally generated by such uses in comparison to a single-family home. Additional information on this standard methodology is available from the District.

The increased Sewer Charge has been calculated by dividing the annual costs of providing wastewater treatment and collection service by the estimated number of ESDs, which results in a Sewer Charge of \$3,294 per ESD.

Each customer with a sewer connection will be charged an annual Sewer Charge calculated as follows:

$$\text{\$3,294 per ESD} \times \text{Number of ESDs}$$

The number of ESDs for your parcel is included in this newsletter in the box to the left of your mailing address.

The draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2026-27 describes the total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Occidental County Sanitation District, c/o the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California 95403, and on Sonoma Water's website at <https://www.sonomawater.org/current-budget>. Also available at this location is the 2026 Written Basis of Sewer Service Charge.

Further Information Available Prior to the Hearing

At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance that will establish the increased Sewer Charge. A copy of the ordinance will be on file and available for review at the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. In addition, please contact Sonoma Water at (707) 521-6215 for further information and/or to obtain copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2026-27, and the written basis for the sewer rates.

Protest Procedure

This notice has been mailed to you because records of the Sonoma County Assessor list you as an owner of one or more parcels within the District that will be subject to the Sewer Charge while connected to the system. In the event you have sold property you may have owned within the District, please send this notice to the new owner. This document can be found in the spring newsletter online at: <https://www.sonomawater.org/ocsd>.

Prior to the public hearing, property owners, or tenants who are directly liable for the payment of the Sewer Charges, may submit written protests respecting the Sewer Charge. At the public hearing, the Board will consider all written protests that have been received by the prescribed deadline. In order to be considered, a written protest must be made on the attached form. Only one protest will be counted per parcel. Only protests signed by the current owner(s), or tenant(s) directly liable for paying the Sewer Charge, will be allowed and the protest must be received no later than the following deadlines:

- If submitted by mail, the protest must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 11, 2026 at the mailing address on the form.
- If hand delivered, the protest must be delivered no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 11, 2026 at the mailing address on the form.

Sonoma Water
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Procedure for Legal Objections

In addition to a protest, you may submit a substantive objection stating grounds why the fee is not in compliance with applicable law. All such objections must be received at the address above by April 21, 2026. A failure to object in writing by this deadline bars any right to challenge the fee in a legal proceeding.

There is a 120-day statute of limitations for challenging any new, increased, or extended fee or charge.

Date of this Notice: March 6, 2026

RATE PROTEST FORM

NOTE: IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED, ANY PROTEST OR OBJECTION MUST USE THIS FORM

WRITTEN PROTEST

I am the parcel owner of the property located at the address on the back of this form, or a tenant that is directly liable for paying the Sewer Charge for the property. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed Sewer Charge increase.

If, in addition to your protest, you have a substantive objection, attach it to this form and use the heading **Objection.**

Signature of Property Owner Required

Print Name

Fold Here First

Place
Postage
Here

Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma Water
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Fold Here Second

Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma Water
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403



IMPORTANT

Sewer Service Fee Notice

(Prop. 218) enclosed for
Occidental County
Sanitation District

HEARING DATE

May 12, 2026 at 10:05 a.m.

HEARING DETAILS

Hearing details can be found
72 hours prior to the meeting at
<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/calendar.aspx>



Included In This Issue

Proposition 218 Notice for proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 sewer rates.

The Notice with information about the proposed rates
is included on pages 5-6 of this newsletter.
The return protest form is located on page 7.



Importante

Aviso De Tarifa De Servicio De Aguas Negras
Aviso de la Proposición 218 respecto a las tarifas
propuestas para el año fiscal 2026-2027.

FECHA DE LA AUDIENCIA

12 de mayo de 2026 a las 10:05 a.m.

DETALLES DE LA AUDIENCIA

Los detalles de la audiencia estarán disponibles 72 horas
antes de la reunión en

<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/calendar.aspx>

Incluido en esta Edición

El aviso con información sobre las tarifas propuestas se
incluye en las páginas 5-6 de este boletín. El formulario de
protesta se encuentra en la página 7.

Este boletín y otros materiales sobre saneamiento de
aguas negras están disponibles en español en

SonomaWater.org/espanol.



**Sonoma
Water**

Clean. Reliable. Essential. Every Day.
SonomaWater.org/OCSD