



**Sonoma  
Water**

**SPRING 2024 NEWS**

Vol. 12, Issue #1

# Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone

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## Strategic Planning and Preparedness

Sonoma Water has contracted with The Sea Ranch Water Company to operate the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone for over 30 years. Sonoma Water and The Sea Ranch Water Company staff take a proactive approach in dealing with natural hazards like storms, making sure to prepare as thoroughly as possible and effectively respond to any challenges that may arise due to natural hazards, like extreme weather events. During power outages, uninterrupted operations is ensured by utilizing backup power from generators. Dealing with power outages in the winter months requires the strategic use of generators, considering the specific circumstances of each situation.

Currently, Sonoma Water and The Sea Ranch Water Company are implementing a project, at the Central Treatment Plant, to replace the sewer crossing at Hugal's Ravine. Despite the removal of surrounding trees, damage was sustained at the Hugal's Ravine crossing during storm events in 2023, requiring the repair. Ensuring a reliable and efficient system is of utmost importance, as it helps prevent any potential future issues. Sonoma Water and The Sea Ranch Water Company provide a unique and careful approach to managing maintenance and operations for the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone by consistently investing in and diligently maintaining the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone's systems.



# About Your Zone

In 1995 Sonoma Water assumed responsibility from the County of Sonoma for managing the county sanitation districts and zones, including your zone. The zone, operated by the Sea Ranch Water Company, consists of two wastewater collection and treatment systems and currently serves 622 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings within a 4,600-acre service area. The Central Plant, which began operation in 1971, is designed to treat average daily dry weather flows of up to 27,000 gallons per day. Treated wastewater is used for irrigation. The North Plant, which began operation in 1972, is designed to treat average daily dry weather flows of up to 160,000 gallons per day. The secondary treated wastewater is sent to the Gualala Community Services District Treatment Plant where it is treated to tertiary standards and then used to irrigate the Sea Ranch Golf Links.



## Sanitation Rate Relief Program

### Save money on your annual sewage bill

Sonoma Water is proposing to our Board of Directors to approve discounts on sewer service bills for low-income homeowners who live within the districts and zones managed by Sonoma Water. The discounts, which can cut the sewage charge on your annual property tax bill in half, would also be available to nonprofit organizations that provide housing to low-income renters. Upon approval by our Board of Directors, Sonoma Water will begin accepting applications on May 22, 2024. Applications are due by no later than July 10. Learn more and apply at [SonomaWater.org/SRRP](https://SonomaWater.org/SRRP).

## Water Rebates in Your Zone

### 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.

**Clothes Washers:** 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.

**Toilet rebates:** 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/rebates](https://SonomaWater.org/rebates) or call (707) 547-1918.

# Maintaining and Repairing Aging Infrastructure

Sonoma Water has managed eight wastewater districts and zones throughout Sonoma County since 1995 when it took over management and operations from the Sonoma County Public Works Department. The districts and zones range in age from 70-plus years (Sonoma Valley, Occidental) to 40 years (Russian River, Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup) and they all face financial challenges. The aging collection and treatment systems require ongoing maintenance and replacement projects.

As water quality regulations become more stringent, operational and capital costs of compliance increase. The small size of most of the districts and zones means there are relatively few ratepayers to share these new costs.

This year the proposed rate increases for many of the districts and zones are larger than they have been in recent years. Sonoma Water recognizes the rate increases can present a financial hardship for ratepayers, and every effort is being made to seek out grants and loans to offset some of the costs for capital projects. Rate increases are needed for the maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance in some cases, to maintain the integrity of these publicly owned assets and to responsibly manage the systems to protect public health and the environment.

The information below details the proposed rate increase for your district or zone and provides a breakdown of how funds are collected and spent. There is also a list of projects planned for the coming year.

	FY 23-24	FY 24-25 Proposed
ESDs*	622	624
Annual Rate Per ESD	\$1,524	\$1,658
Annual Increase	\$124	\$134
Monthly Rate per ESD	\$127.00	\$138.17
Monthly Increase	\$10.33	\$11.17
Rate Increase	8.9%	8.8%
Increased Revenue	\$77,128	\$83,581

\*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

After the proposed budgets and rates are developed, the budgets are available for public review at the end of March. The draft proposed budgets for all sanitation districts and zones will be available for review 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://SonomaWater.org/Current-Budget).

In addition, owners of the properties in district 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 21, 2024 at the Board of Supervisors chambers. (A protest form and rate hearing information are available on pages 5-7 of this notice).

## FY 2024-2025 Budgeted Expenditures

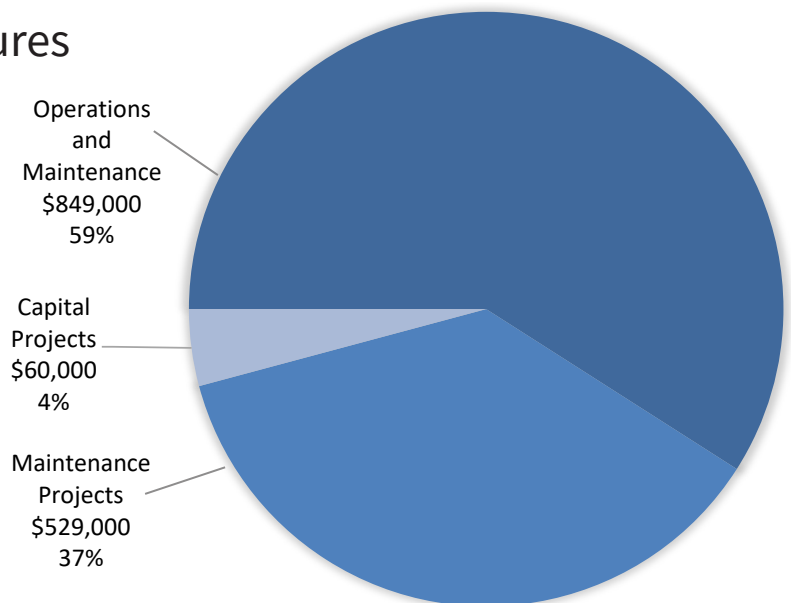
**\$1,438,000**

### Capital Projects – \$60,000

- Treatment Plant Influent Pipeline Replacement

### Maintenance Projects – \$529,000

- Influent Meters
- Planning Transfer to Sea Ranch
- Regulatory Permitting Assistance
- Tree Removal



# Fats, oils and grease cause clogs down the drain *throw them away instead!*

Proper disposal of fats, oils and grease (or FOGs) is essential our sewer systems run smoothly. When hot water and soap are used to wash fats, oils or grease down the sink, they can solidify and cause blockages in sewer laterals and mains. To prevent this, it's important to allow these materials to cool off before disposal. You can cool hot fats, oils and grease in a container or wipe pans with a paper towel. Dispose of cooled fats, oils or grease by either trashing them, composting them, or recycling them locally, especially for large quantities of oil or grease. This simple step helps prolong sanitation infrastructure and prevent costly repairs.



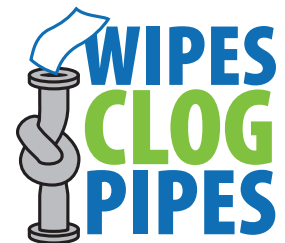
## Flushed Wipes Clog Pipes Toilets are not trashcans!

Wipes can catch on tree roots intruding in sewer lines and accumulate with fats, oils and grease becoming large obstructions in the pipes. Further down the line, they weave together and create giant rags which get stuck in pumps, collection systems and motors, causing backups and equipment failures.

Single-use wet wipes have gained popularity in recent years. Many of these products are marketed as flushable, but often times are not compatible with sewer systems and infrastructure. Flushing these products presents an increasing problem for property owners and sewer systems since wipes often do not break down after being flushed.

We are asking residents not to discard wipes in the toilet, but instead to throw them in the trash to avoid backups and overflow. Protect your sewer pipes by disposing of fats, oils and grease in the trash, not down the drain.

For more information, please visit: [SonomaWater.org/PollutionPrevention](http://SonomaWater.org/PollutionPrevention).



### Do Not Flush

- Baby wipes
- Bathroom cleaning wipes
- Hard surface cleaning wipes
- Disinfecting wipes
- Hand sanitizing wipes
- Antibacterial wipes
- Facial and makeup removal wipes
- Feminine hygiene wipes
- Personal care wipes for use on the body
- Adult incontinence wipes
- Adult hygiene wipes
- Fats, oils, and grease



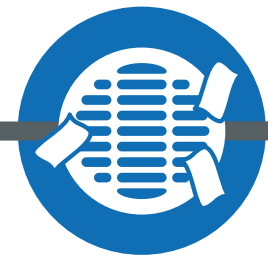
#### FLUSHED WIPES

Flushing wet wipes down the toilet can clog plumbing systems, leading to expensive repairs. Many people don't know that wipes shouldn't go in the toilet and pose a risk for sewer infrastructure.



#### CLOGGED SEWER LINES

Wipes make their way into private sewer laterals, septic systems, and sewer lines and can cause extensive harm and result in overflows and property damage.



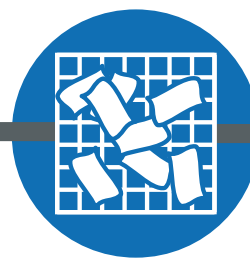
#### SEWER OVERFLOWS

Once wipes make it to the sewer collection system, they can catch on roots that infiltrate pipes, weave together to form large rags and attract fats, oils and grease. This can result in blockages and sewer spills.



#### ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

Even when wipes filter out of the wastewater stream, small microfibers and microplastics can shed off wipes. These fibers can't be captured and can make their way into the environment.



#### DISRUPTED TREATMENT PLANTS

Oftentimes, masses of wipes manage to make it through the collection system and end up at wastewater treatment plants, which can result in significant damage to treatment infrastructure and recurrent disruption of the treatment process.



#### DAMAGED COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Most collection systems rely on pumps to move wastewater to treatment facilities. Wipes can clog these pumps, resulting in spills, system failures, increased maintenance requirements and damage to expensive equipment.

# **PROPOSITION 218**

## **Sonoma County Water Agency**

### **Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone**

#### **Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Proposed Sewer Service Rate Increase**

##### **Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing**

On **May 21, 2024 at 9:45 a.m.** or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) 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 Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone (Zone) to property within the Zone. If approved, the increased Sewer Charge and rate structure modifications will become effective on July 1, 2024.

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, 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 Charge Increase**

Effective July 1, 2024, the Zone proposes to increase the Sewer Charge to \$1,658 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an annual increase of \$134 or \$11.17 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 Zone.

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 \$1,658 per ESD.

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

$$\text{\$1,658 per ESD} \times \text{Number of ESDs}$$

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 2024-25 describes the total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone, 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>.

## 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, the following person may be contacted at the Agency at (707) 526-5370 for further information and/or to obtain copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2024-25: Kathy Badger, Administrative Aide

## 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 Zone which 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 Zone, please send this notice to the new owner. This document can be found in the spring newsletter online at: <https://www.sonomawater.org/srsz>.

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 20, 2024 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 20, 2024 at the mailing address on the form.*

Sonoma Water  
404 Aviation Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

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

**Date of this Notice: March 26, 2024**

# RATE PROTEST FORM

**NOTE: IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED, ANY PROTEST MUST BE ON 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.

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Use opposite side or attach additional sheets if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Property Owner Required

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

*Fold Here First*

Place  
Postage  
Here

Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone  
c/o Sonoma Water  
404 Aviation Blvd  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

*Fold Here Second*

Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone  
c/o Sonoma Water  
404 Aviation Blvd  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403



## IMPORTANT

### Sewer Service Fee Notice

(Prop. 218) enclosed for  
Sea Ranch  
Sanitation Zone

### HEARING DATE

May 21, 2024 at 9:45 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 2024-2025 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 2024-2025.

#### FECHA DE LA AUDIENCIA

21 de mayo de 2024 a las 9:45 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](https://SonomaWater.org/espanol).



**Sonoma  
Water**

Clean. Reliable. Essential. Every day.  
[SonomaWater.org/SRSZ](https://SonomaWater.org/SRSZ)