



**Sonoma
Water**

SPRING 2024 NEWS

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Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District

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Infrastructure Improvements

As stewards of our community's sanitation needs, the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation district staff continues enhancing the district's infrastructure. Through ongoing upgrades and replacements, staff strive to ensure the reliability and efficiency of the wastewater system, safeguarding public health and the environment.

Treatment Plant Masterplan

District staff and its consultant are in the process of developing a wastewater treatment plant master plan. The master plan will provide an overall plan to cost effectively coordinate and prioritize recommended improvements to maintain and improve the wastewater treatment plant's reliability, address regulatory requirements, enhance treatment plant performance and reduce operational costs.

Trunk main projects

Some recent improvements include trunk main projects, aimed at modernizing aging sewer pipelines to bolster their capacity and durability. These projects target sections of the main sewer pipeline identified as undersized or prone to leak and replace them with newer, larger pipelines, resulting in a significant reduction in sewer overflows and a more dependable conveyance of wastewater to the treatment plant.

In the spring of 2023, district staff successfully completed the construction of 2,100 feet of new 27-inch diameter sewer pipe, alongside 620 feet of new 8-inch diameter side main sewer, at a

cost of \$2.9 million. In 2024, the district plans to replace 3,200 feet of trunk main with new 24-inch diameter pipe estimated at \$5.5 million. Staff are also in the design phase for the replacement of another 5,000 feet of pipe, slated for construction in 2039. Each of these projects include the upgrades to associated manholes and reattachment of existing connecting sewer lines.

Headworks replacement

The headworks rehabilitation project, which began in April 2022, reached substantial completion in summer 2023. This project involved replacement and enhancement of mechanical screening and washing press equipment, coupled with necessary electrical and control upgrades. By fortifying these critical components, staff mitigated the risk of damage caused by rags, sticks, and debris, safeguarding the integrity of our treatment plant pumps and biological processes.

Clarifier seismic retrofit

Scheduled for construction in 2024 and 2025, the clarifier seismic retrofit project represents a proactive measure to bolster the resilience of our secondary treatment clarifiers. With an estimated cost of more than \$6.4 million, this project aims to enhance operational reliability by ensuring the clarifiers can withstand seismic activity, thereby minimizing potential disruptions to the wastewater treatment processes after an earthquake.

System Evaluation and Capacity Assurance Plan Analysis

In accordance with the California Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems, a Sewer System Management Plan has been developed for the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District. The Sewer System Management Plan describes how the sewer collection system will be operated, maintained, and evaluated.

A requirement of the Sewer System Management Plan is a system evaluation and capacity assurance plan. Currently, the sewer collection system capacity study, for the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District, is in the process of being updated. District staff are working with the County of Sonoma to ensure existing and future development is identified and taken into account when evaluating available capacity.

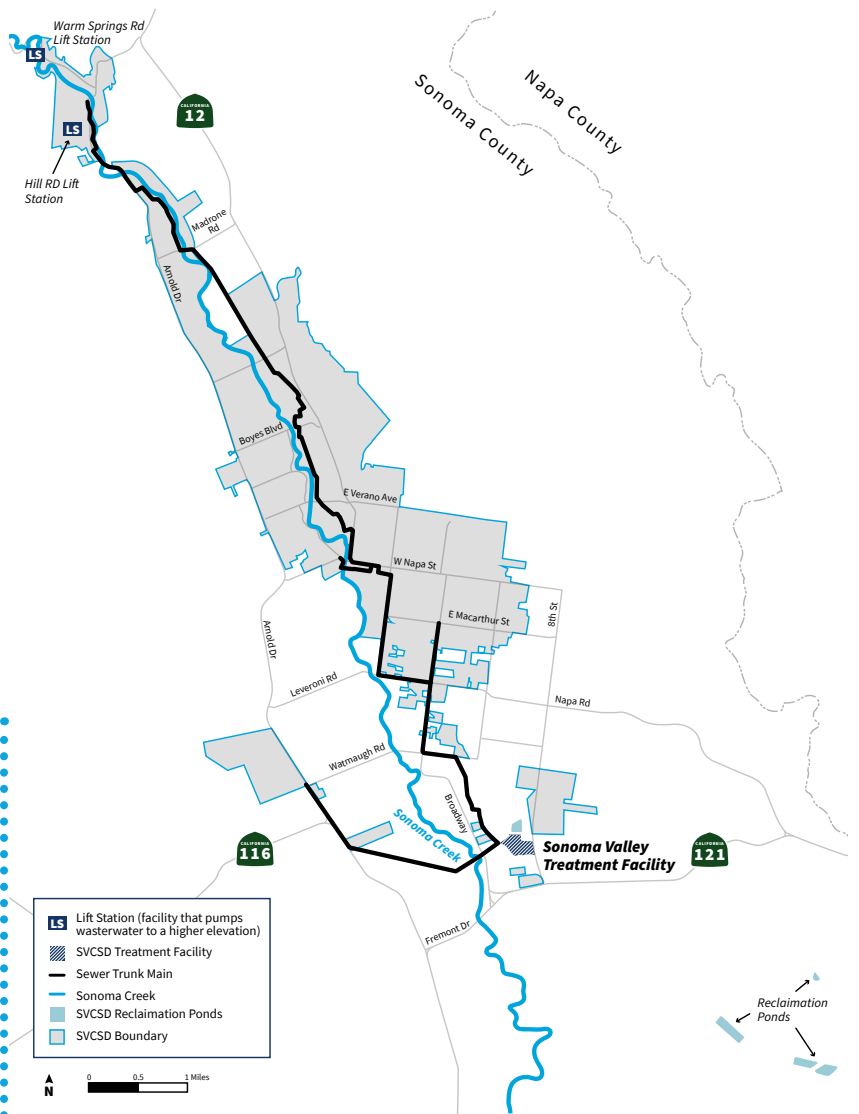
Influent-effluent pumping and piping upgrade project

In preparation for construction in 2025, the influent-effluent pumping and piping upgrade project is currently in the design phase. With an estimated cost of \$11.2 million, this initiative encompasses the comprehensive replacement of influent and effluent pumps, piping, motors and electrical systems. By modernizing these critical components, the system's capacity and reliability in managing the inflow and outflow of wastewater will be improved.

As we forge ahead with these essential infrastructure projects, we remain dedicated to transparency, efficiency and environmental stewardship.

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 operation in 1953. Currently, it serves 17,789 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings within a 4,500-acre service area. The treatment plant has a design capacity of 3 million gallons per day (average daily dry weather flow) and treats wastewater to tertiary treatment levels (also referred to as advanced water treatment). High-quality recycled water is an important resource and its use offsets potable water demands and enhances the environment. The recycled water is used for irrigation and wetland/salt marsh enhancement and can be discharged into Schell Slough or Hudeman Slough under specific operating conditions.



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 to 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.

Water Rebates in Your District

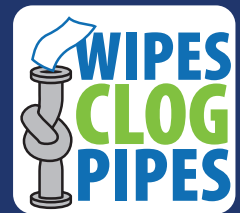
Water-Saving rebate programs available

If you are a City of Sonoma or Valley of the Moon Water District customer, you have some water saving tools at your fingertips! Please take advantage of the following water saving programs which are offered on a first-come, first-served basis while funding is available.

Clothes washers: Receive up to \$50 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.

For more information, go to www.savingwaterpartnership.org/programs_list/washer-rebate/.

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



Wipes can catch on tree roots 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.

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.



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*	17,789	17,820
Annual Rate Per ESD	\$1,272	\$1,348
Annual Increase	\$72	\$76
Monthly Rate per ESD	\$106.00	\$112.33
Monthly Increase	\$6.00	\$6.33
Rate Increase	6.0%	6.0%
Increased Revenue	\$1,280,808	\$1,354,320

*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.

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 16, 2023 at the Board of Supervisors chambers. (A protest form and rate hearing information are available on pages 5-7 of this notice).

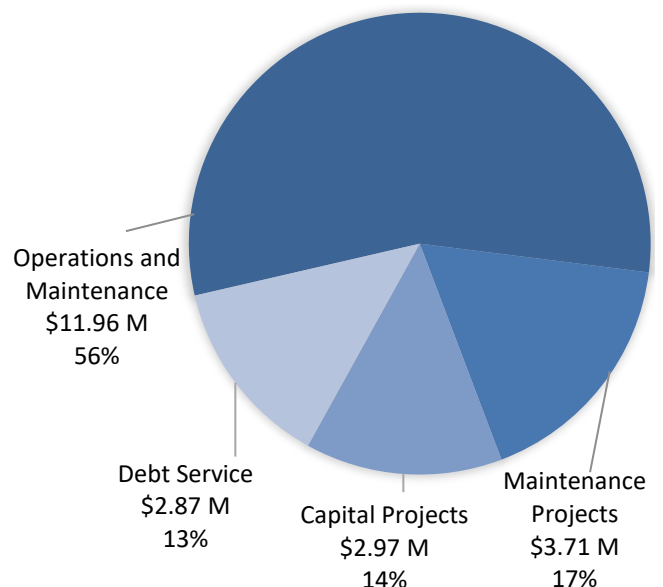
FY 2024-2025 Budgeted Expenditures \$21.51 Million

Capital Projects –\$2.97 Million

- Treatment Plant Clarifiers Seismic Retrofit Construction
- Treatment Plant Pumping and Piping Upgrades Project
- Trunk Main Replacement Phases 5A & 5B Design
- Trunk Main Seismic Hazard Mitigation at Hooker Creek Design

Maintenance Projects – \$3.71 Million

- Arc Flash Studies
- Comprehensive Plan Development
- Management Unit Restoration
- Piping, Manhole, and Lateral Repair and Replacement
- Regulatory Permitting and Hazardous Materials Assistance



PROPOSITION 218

Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District

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, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District (District) will conduct a public hearing to consider increasing the annual sewer service charge (Sewer Charge) and make rate structure modifications. If approved, the increased Sewer Charge 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 upon which is located one or more structures that are connected to the system and 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 Service 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.

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 District's total annual expenses in detail and is available for review at the Sonoma Valley 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>.

Calculation of the Sewer Rate Increase

The District has two categories of users:

A) Non-Residential Users and Residential Users with No Public Water Connection. This category of users has a Sewer Charge that is fixed. NOTE: Residential Users that have a Public Water Connection but have no water usage in winter months and multi-family complexes including condominiums with only one Public Water Connection for all of the units are also included in this category.

B) Residential Users with a Public Water Connection. This category of users has a Sewer Charge that has both a fixed charge component and a volume-based component.

The method for calculating the Sewer Charge for each category of user is described in more detail below.

A) Amount of Proposed Sewer Rate Increase for Non-Residential Users and Residential Users with No Public Water Connection.

Effective July 1, 2024, the District proposes to increase the charge per Equivalent Single-Family Dwelling (ESD) to \$1,348 per ESD per year for users in this category. This represents an annual increase of \$76 or \$6.33 per month. This increase to the ESD charge has been calculated by dividing the annual costs of providing wastewater treatment and collection service by the total estimated number of ESDs in the District.

A standard single-family home constitutes one ESD. Properties that are not single family homes are converted to ESDs based on industry standard methods and more information about this conversion is available from the District. Parcels which have other uses (for example, apartments and commercial buildings) will be assigned a number of ESDs using standard equivalency factors which estimate the probable quantity and quality of sewage effluent normally generated by such uses in comparison to a single-family home.

The Sewer Charge for Non-Residential Users and Residential Users with No Public Water Connection is calculated as follows:

$$\$1,348 \text{ per ESD} \times \text{Assigned Number of ESD's} = \text{Annual Sewer Charge}$$

B) Sewer Rate Increase Proposed For Residential Users With a Public Water Connection

All residential sewer customers with a public water connection must pay a Sewer Charge with two components: a fixed charge and a volume-based charge. The Residential Users with a Public Water Connection category includes single-family dwellings, multiple-family units, apartments, and mobile home parks. A multi-family complex or condominium complex will also fall within this category if each unit in the complex has its own public water connection.

1. Fixed Charge Component: The fixed charge component of the Sewer Charge funds approximately 70% of the District's costs to provide sewer services, including costs that the sewage treatment and collection system incurs regardless of increased or decreased sewage flow into the system.

Effective July 1, 2024 the District proposes to increase the fixed charge to \$943.84 per ESD per year for residential users with a public water connection. This represents an annual increase of \$53.06 or \$4.43 per month.

The fixed charge component of the Sewer Charge will be calculated as follows:

$$\$943.84 \text{ per ESD} \times \text{Number of ESD's} = \text{Fixed Charge Component of the Sewer Charge}$$

2. Volume-Based Component: The volume-based component funds approximately 30% of the District's costs to provide sewer service, including costs to the sewage treatment and collection system that vary with the amount of sewage conveyed and treated. The District's volume-based component uses a customer's lowest winter water use as the basis for the calculation. Winter water use is used because it generally provides the best available estimate of indoor water use and its impact to the District's treatment facilities because outdoor irrigation is usually minimal during the winter months.

The Volume-Based Component of the Sewer Charge has three parts, which are multiplied together:

Winter Water Usage x Number of Billing Periods Annually from your Water District x per thousand gallon = Volume-Based Component of Sewer Charge

Effective July 1, 2024, the District proposes to increase the volume-based component charge to \$7.62 per thousand gallons for residential users with a public water connection. This represents an increase of \$0.42 per thousand gallons. Each residential user with a sewer connection and a public water connection with winter water use greater than zero will be charged as follows:

Total Sewer Charge (fixed charge + volumetric charge) for Residential Customers with a Public Water Connection

For Customers with a Valley of the Moon Water District bill:
\$943.84 per ESD x Number of ESD's (Fixed Charge Component) +
\$7.62 per thousand gallons x Lowest Winter Water Usage in thousand gallons
x 6 to calculate annual amount (Volumetric Charge Component)

For Customers with a City of Sonoma Water District water bill:
\$943.84 per ESD x Number of ESD's (Fixed Charge Component) +
\$7.62 per thousand gallons x Lowest Winter Water Usage in thousand gallons
x 12 to calculate annual amount (Volumetric Charge Component)

Further Information Available Prior to the Hearing

At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance which 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 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/svcsd>.

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

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

Fold Here Second

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



IMPORTANT

Sewer Service Fee Notice

(Prop. 218) enclosed for
Sonoma Valley County
Sanitation District

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.



**Sonoma
Water**

Clean. Reliable. Essential. Every day.
SonomaWater.org/SVCS