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OCCIDENTAL COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT

DISTRICT CONTINUES TO EXPLORE LONG-RANGE TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL OPTIONS

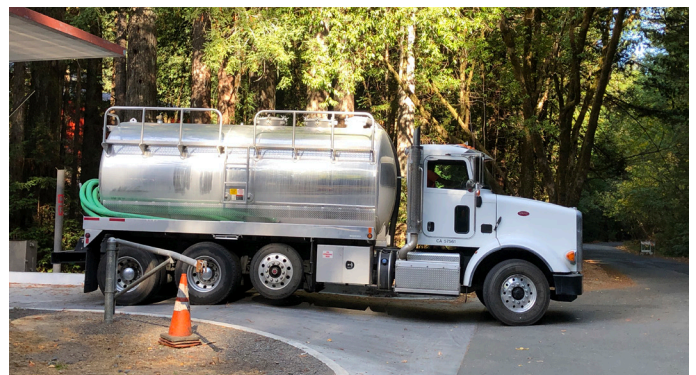
The Occidental County Sanitation District (District) is continuing its ongoing efforts to find solutions to the District's long-term wastewater treatment and disposal issues. District officials are assessing a number of strategies to contain costs for residents, property owners and business owners in Occidental during the pandemic, and exploring a potential partnership with the Graton Community Services District as a long-range treatment and disposal option.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, District officials have been working with the largest users in the sanitation district to adjust the way they are billed for wastewater service. With pandemic restrictions in place, the community's two large restaurants have been hard hit by drastic reductions in business. The District has adjusted the billing structure for its largest customers based on actual volume, and in a way that does not negatively affect the entire rate structure.

In the past two years the District ceased operation of its treatment plant and started trucking untreated wastewater to the Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup Sanitation Zone treatment plant near the Sonoma County Airport. The District's biggest expense is now the cost of trucking, which has been reduced with the reduction in wastewater production. Even with that reduction in

cost, however, the District will still be requesting a rate increase, which will begin to offset the portion of the District costs that are subsidized by Sonoma Water's general fund.

The District is also studying the feasibility of a pipeline project to convey wastewater from Occidental to the Graton Community Services District (GCSD) treatment plant. The feasibility study will evaluate the impacts and benefits of a pipeline project that could utilize excess treatment capacity at the GCSD plant and reduce operational costs for the District. Results of the feasibility study will be available later this year.



HOW YOUR SEWER SERVICE FEES ARE SPENT

Service fees collected from property owners are used to operate and maintain the sanitation facilities that are managed by Sonoma Water. This graphic depiction provides a snapshot of types of activities that are required to operate our facilities in an environmentally responsible and fiscally prudent manner, to replace worn out equipment before it fails.



COLLECTION SYSTEM
1¢

OPERATIONS
61¢



HOW YOUR SEWER SERVICE FEE DOLLAR IS SPENT

ONE DOLLAR



ENGINEERING, ADMINISTRATION, REGULATORY COMPLIANCE
14¢

MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION
25¢



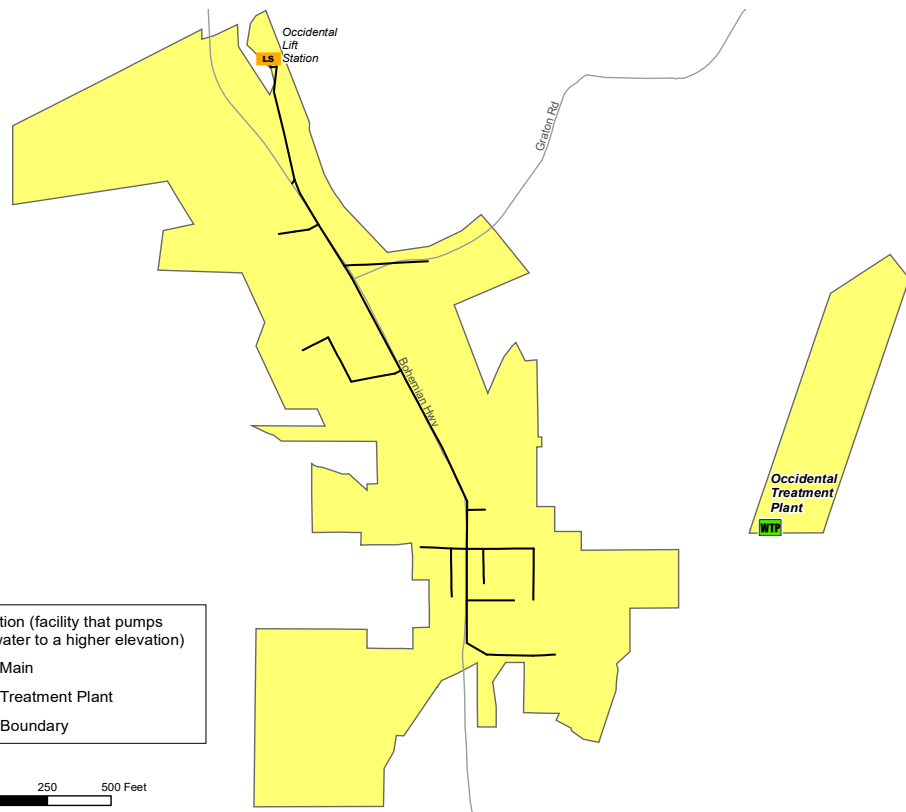
BUDGET APPROVAL

After the proposed budgets and rates are developed, the budgets are available for public review at the end of March. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, 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, notices of the proposed rates are mailed to the owners of the properties in the districts and zones at that time. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, which this year are scheduled for May 18 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 for treatment and disposal.



COVID-19'S IMPACT ON BUDGETS AND SEWER SERVICE CHARGES

To Our Ratepayers,

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on many residents and businesses throughout our county and beyond. As managers of eight small sanitation districts and zones, we are well aware of the financial burden of rising sanitation charges during these difficult times and we are making every effort to soften the impacts as much as possible.

The eight sanitation zones and districts managed by Sonoma Water are all experiencing financial constraints. Revenues are decreasing as some property owners are unable to pay their sewer service charges, and we anticipate that there will be more delinquencies as the economic impact of the pandemic continues. The districts and zones are faced with tight budgets, but we will work hard to maintain our facilities and continue to operate the systems in a safe and reliable manner. While we remain committed to operate and maintain the systems in a responsible manner, protect public health and the environment, and comply with regulatory requirements, the costs to meet those requirements continue to increase.

This year we have made several adjustments to keep rate increases at a minimum, including cutting overhead costs, deferring maintenance where it is possible, and delaying studies and capital improvement projects.

One of the challenges inherent with small districts and zones is that there are a limited number of residents and businesses to share the costs of operations, maintenance, and project implementation. With a smaller rate base, costs are borne by fewer customers. As the manager of these districts and zones, Sonoma Water continues to advocate for special districts and rural counties to receive COVID support and we are actively seeking support from state and federal sources.

Our hearts go out to the many individuals, families, businesses and communities who are suffering during this pandemic. We will continue to provide critical sanitation services to you and find ways to limit the cost of these services. As always, we will continue to keep public safety and system reliability our top priorities.

Sincerely,

Grant Davis
General Manager, Sonoma Water

WATER REBATES IN YOUR DISTRICT

SANITATION ZONE WATER SAVING REBATE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

As a Sanitation District customer, you have some water saving tools at your fingertips! The Sonoma County Sanitation Water Efficiency Rebate Program was established to help you save water, save money, and reduce wastewater flows to your local wastewater treatment plant. Please take advantage of the water saving programs which are offered on a first-come, first-served basis while funding lasts. Visit www.sonomawater.org/rebates to see what is available.

EFFICIENCY UPGRADES FOR LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

Your Sanitation District is piloting a program for low-income households to provide water and energy efficiency upgrades in conjunction with Pacific Gas & Electric's (PG&E) Energy Savings Assistance Program. Qualified customers participating in the program will receive a comprehensive home water and energy assessment and fixtures found to be inefficient will be upgraded at no cost with new models. Fixtures funded by the District include high-efficiency toilets, showerheads, and faucet aerators.

Participants must live in a home, mobile home or apartment built before 1994 that has an active sewer connection with the District and have electric and/or gas service through PG&E. Household income must meet the same guidelines as those for the California Alternative Rates for Energy Program (CARE) to qualify for this program. Funding for this program is limited and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. To see if you qualify, please call Christina at Bottom Line Utility Solutions, the local program contractor, today at (800) 597-2835.

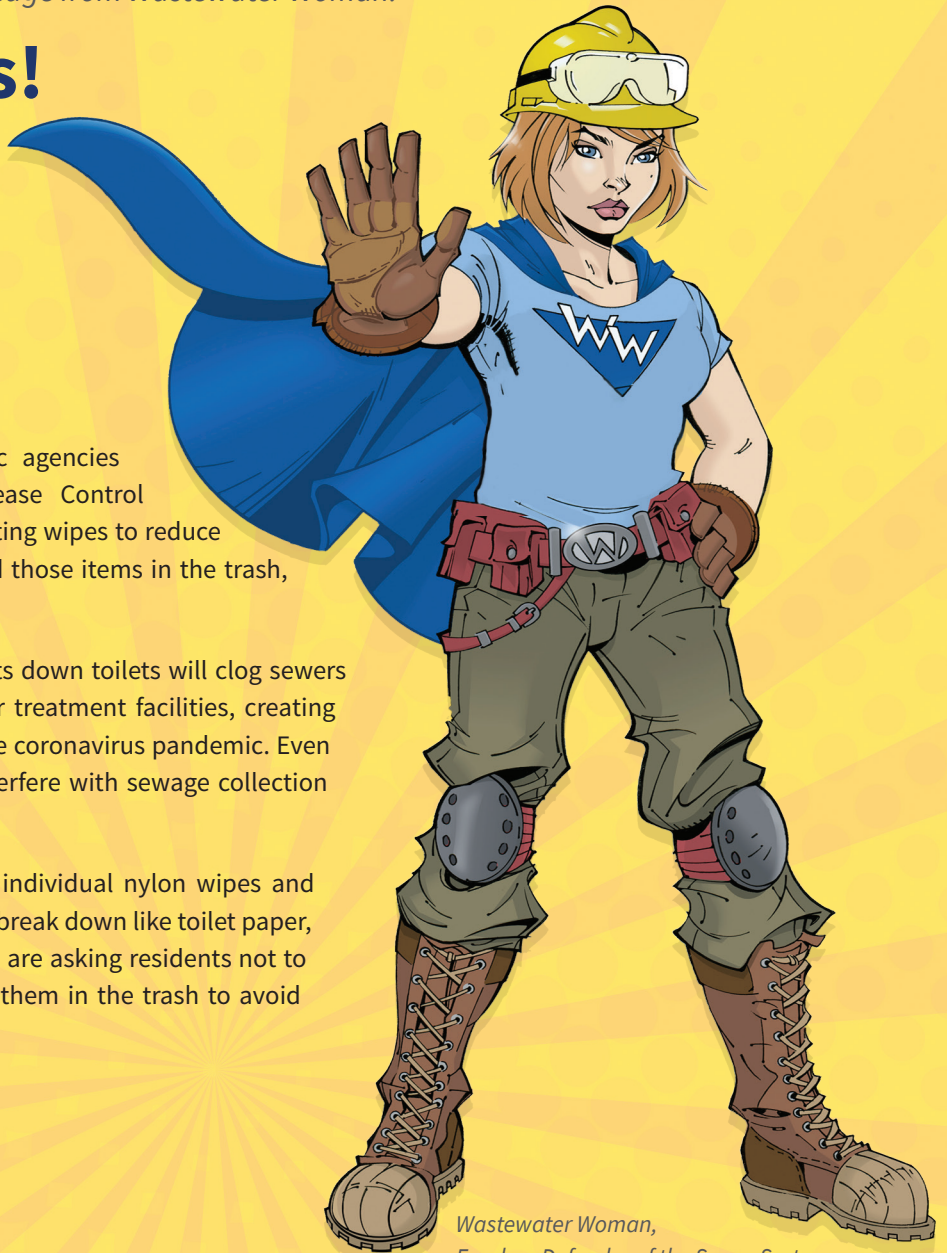
Wipes Clog Pipes!

Do Not Flush Disinfecting Wipes or Paper Towels - Throw Them Away instead.

While the State Water Board and other public agencies encourage us to follow the Centers for Disease Control recommendations to clean surfaces with disinfecting wipes to reduce the spread of COVID-19, it is important to discard those items in the trash, not the toilet.

Flushing wipes, paper towels and similar products down toilets will clog sewers and cause backups and overflows at wastewater treatment facilities, creating an additional public health risk in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Even wipes labeled “flushable” will clog pipes and interfere with sewage collection and treatment throughout the state.

The wastewater systems were not designed for individual nylon wipes and paper towels. The wipes and paper towels do not break down like toilet paper, and therefore clog systems very quickly. Facilities are asking residents not to discard wipes in the toilet, but instead to throw them in the trash to avoid backups and overflow.



*Wastewater Woman,
Fearless Defender of the Sewer System*



Wipes are among the leading causes of sewer system backups, impacting sewer system and treatment plant pumps and treatment systems.

Many spills go to our streams and creeks where they have broad ranging impacts on public-health and the environment. Preventing sewer spills is important, especially during this COVID-19 emergency, for the protection of public health and the environment.

Please do not flush disinfectant wipes or paper towels down the toilet.

PROPOSITION 218

Occidental County Sanitation District

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE FEE INCREASE

Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On **May 18, 2021 at 1:30 p.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, 2021.

Please note: the Board of Supervisors Meeting will be facilitated virtually through Zoom and due to the pandemic, and in accordance with Executive Orders N-25-20 and N-29-20, the May 18, 2021 Board of Directors meeting will be held virtually. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY NOT ATTEND THIS MEETING IN PERSON. Information regarding public online 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. The District recognizes the far-reaching financial impacts of COVID-19 on its customers, and has gone to great lengths to cut operations and maintenance costs, defer maintenance where practicable, delay studies and capital improvement projects, and reduce the rate increase while continuing to keep public safety and system reliability our top priorities.

Sewer Rate Increase

Effective July 1, 2021, the District proposes to increase the Sewer Charge to \$2,604 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an increase of \$100, or 4.0% compared to the current year. 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 \$2,604 per ESD. Each customer with a sewer connection will be charged an annual Sewer Charge calculated as follows:

\$2,604 per ESD X 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 2021-22 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>

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 is 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 obtaining copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2021-22: 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: 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 must be received no later than the following deadlines:

If submitted by mail, they must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 17, 2021 at the mailing address on the form.

If hand delivered, they must be delivered no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 17, 2021 at the mailing address on the form.

Sonoma Water
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Date of this Notice: March 29, 2021

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 service fee for the property. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed sewer rate 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

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 18, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.

HEARING DETAILS

The Hearing will be held virtually through Zoom.

Hearing details can be found at

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

ATTENTION IMPORTANT SEWER RATE INFORMATION INSIDE



INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

Proposition 218 Notice for proposed
Fiscal Year 2021-2022 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.



**Sonoma
Water**

Clean. Reliable. Essential. Every day.

www.sonomawater.org/OCSD