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SEA RANCH SANITATION ZONE

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FOR FIRE PREVENTION AND FACILITIES PROTECTION

The threat of wildfire along the coast continues to increase each year, and is greater as we move into the months of high temperatures, low humidity, drying vegetation, and high winds.

The Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone (SRSZ) is taking steps to prevent these threats from causing damage to the treatment facilities. During the past year, a total of about 35 dying pine trees were removed around the wastewater treatment basins at a cost of \$12,800 to reduce fire risks. Like many pines in the coastal region, the trees were in various stages of disease that can lead to rapid death. One of the causes for this disease is thought to be years of stress from drought conditions, which can result in greater susceptibility to disease and infestation from insects. Post-fire impacts – including from flash floods and mudslides – can result in higher wastewater treatment costs. In addition, the SRSZ is also video-inspecting collection system lines in the Central Sanitation Zone.

SRSZ is proactively working on fire prevention and protection of wastewater facilities to ensure high quality service for the customers we serve. For more information about fire prevention in the North Sonoma Coast, please visit <http://northsonomacoastfpd.org/about-us/stations>



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
13¢

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE
79¢



ENGINEERING, ADMINISTRATION, REGULATORY COMPLIANCE
8¢

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).

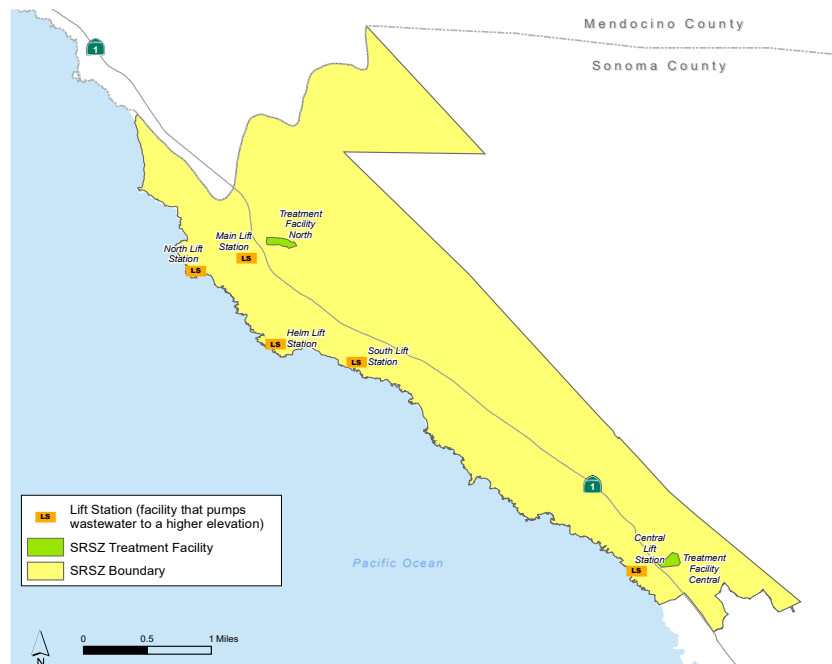
ABOUT YOUR ZONE

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 609 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.



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 ZONE

SANITATION 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 which are offered on a first-come, first-served basis while funding lasts:

Clothes Washers: Receive up to \$125 back on the purchase and installation of a new, qualifying high-efficiency clothes washer (HEW). Rebates are available for all Energy Star Most Efficient 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 (HET) from the List of Qualifying Models.

Download rebate application forms and learn more at www.sonomawater.org/rebates or call (707) 547-1918.

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

Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE RATE 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, 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, 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 Zone 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 Charge Increase

Effective July 1, 2021, the Zone proposes to increase the Sewer Charge to \$1,286 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an increase of \$44, or 3.5% 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 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 \$1,286 per ESD.

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

\$1,286 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 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 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 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: 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 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 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 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/SRSZ