Sonoma Water

SPRING 2022 NEWS

Vol. 10, Issue #1

INSIDE

2 About Your Zone / Tours / Rebates

3 Budgets And Sewer Service Charges

4 Wipes Clog Pipes

5 All About Prop. 218

7 Rate Protest Form

SEA RANCH SANITATION ZONE

Technology And Data Upgrades at Central Treatment Plant and Helm Lift Station

Wastewater monitoring is critical in operating an efficient sanitation system in our community. This past year, the Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone invested in technology upgrades to the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) digital network and computer system.

SCADA gathers and analyzes real-time data to ensure stable and reliable operations. Aqua Sierra Controls, Inc. was contracted to provide SCADA system upgrades and incorporate new pumps, valves, and analyzers at the Central Treatment Plant and Helm Lift Station. The project also included replacement of two pump control panels. These necessary projects resulted in a materials cost of $233,941.27.

SCADA systems and various process control software allow for the automation and computerization of treatment processes that allow remote operations, reducing overall operational costs.

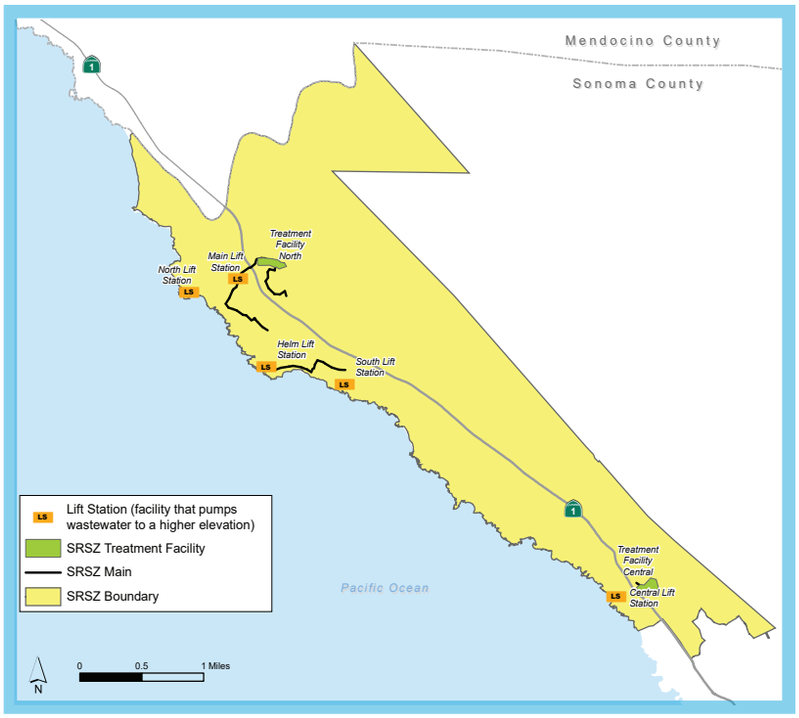
About Your Zone

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.



Virtual Tours Spring 2022

Sonoma Water is pleased to invite community members to enjoy a free virtual tour of a sanitation district. Go to www.sonomawater.org/sanitation-districts-and-zones or scan the QR code to take a tour.

Scan me

At this time, no in-person public tours are scheduled due to COVID-19. Please visit our web page to stay up to date with the latest offerings, www.sonomawater.org/tours. You can also sign up for Sonoma Water's E-News to learn about current projects and future events.

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 which are 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 (HEW). 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 (HET) from the List of Qualifying Models.

Download rebate application forms and learn more at www.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. Given the facilities life span, the aging infrastructure of collection and treatment systems require ongoing replacement and maintenance projects.

Each of the districts and zones face more stringent water quality regulations, which increases operational and capital costs. Most of the districts and zones are relatively small and that means a smaller ratepayer base is responsible for these increasing 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, and an effort to maintain the integrity of these publicly owned assets and responsibly manage the systems in a way that protects public health and the environment.

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

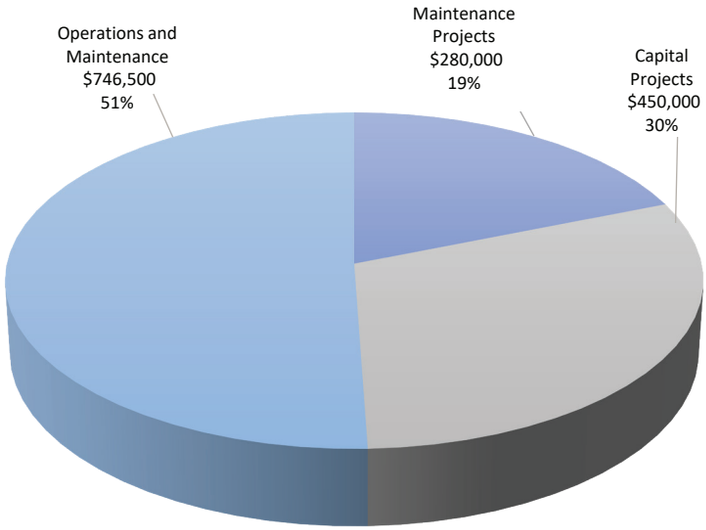
	FY21-22	FY22-23 Proposed
ESDs*	609	612
Annual Rate Per ESD	$1,286	$1,400
Annual Increase	$44.00	$114.00
Monthly Rate per ESD	$107.17	$116.67
Monthly Increase	$3.67	$9.50
Rate Increase	3.5%	8.9%
Increased Revenue	$26,800	$69,800

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

FY 22-23 Budgeted Expenditures - $1.48 Million



Capital Projects - $450,000

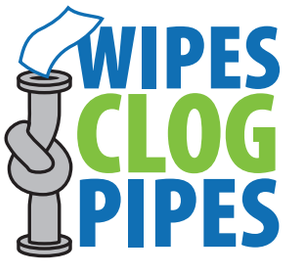
- Treatment Plant Influent Pipeline Replacement Preliminary Design

Maintenance Projects - $280,000

- Central Treatment Plant Generator Purchase
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
- Sanitary Sewer Management Planning

Fats, Oils, and Grease (F.O.G.s) Cause Clogs
Throw Them Away instead

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.



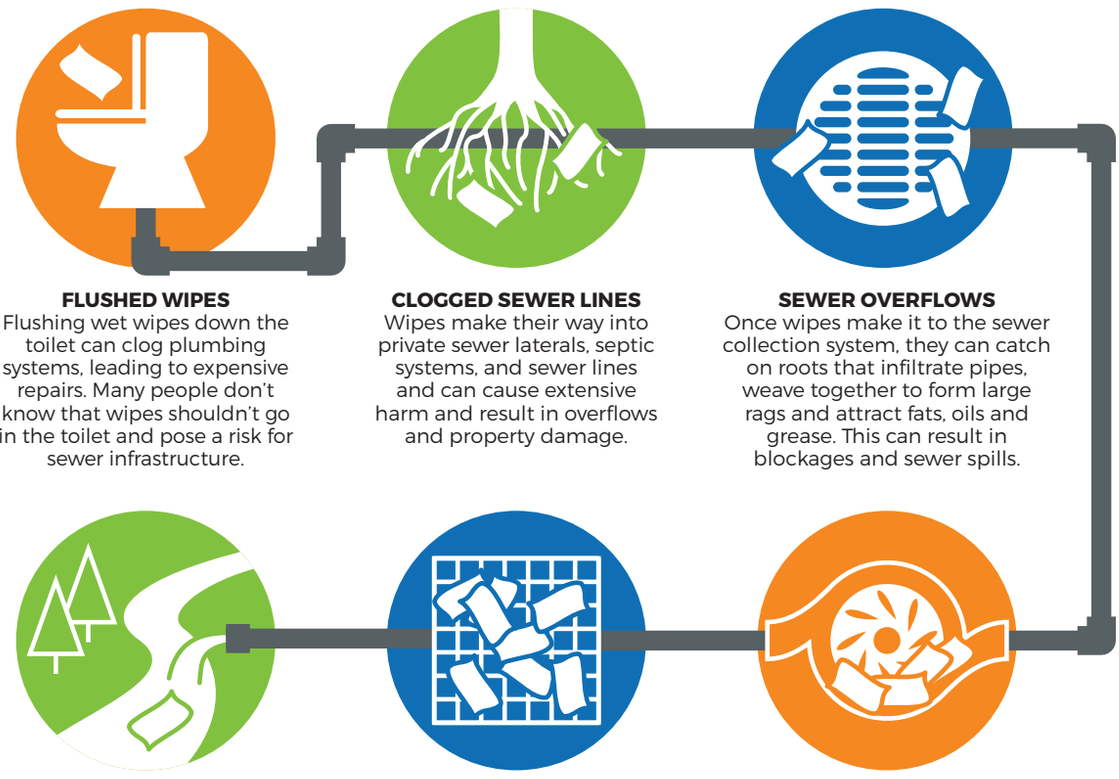
Single-use wet wipes have gained popularity in recent years. Many of these products are marketed as flushable, but often times are not compatible with sewer systems and infrastructure. Flushing these products presents an increasing problem for property owners and sewer systems since wipes often do not 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: www.sonomawater.org/pollutionprevention.

Get The Facts, Get #FlushSmart

If you see the Do Not Flush symbol on wipes packaging then please dispose of the item in the trash and not the toilet. The Do Not Flush (DNF) symbol is required by law in California for wipes likely to be used in a bathroom and that have significant potential to be flushed.



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.

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

CASA
CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SANITATION AGENCIES
CasaWeb.org/wipes

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 17, 2022 at 2:30 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, 2022.

> **Please note:** The public hearing will be held in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California. However, it may be held virtually if required by COVID-19 pandemic conditions. If the meeting is held virtually, then 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.

Sewer Charge Increase

Effective July 1, 2022, the Zone proposes to increase the Sewer Charge to $1,400 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an increase of $114, or 8.9% 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 $1,400 per ESD.

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

> **$1,400 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 2022-23 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 2022-23: 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, the protest must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 16, 2022 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 16, 2022 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 31, 2022

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 17, 2022 at 2:30 p.m.

HEARING DETAILS

Hearing details can be found
72 hours prior to the meeting 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 2022-2023 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