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OCCIDENTAL COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT Occidental to Graton Sewer Transfer Pipeline Project

The Occidental County Sanitation District (OCSD) is continuing its efforts to find solutions to the district’s long-term wastewater treatment and disposal issues.

Currently, Sonoma Water transfers OCSD raw sewage to its Airport-Larkfield-Wikiup treatment facility by truck. Since rate-payer payments are insufficient to cover the complete cost, county taxpayers finance the transportation of sewage. During situations such as the storms of January 2023, extra personnel are required to transport sewage by truck 24 hours a day, seven days a week to effectively manage the massive inflow of water into the system and maintain the safety of the community.

Since 2021, OCSD officials have been studying the feasibility of transporting wastewater by pipeline to the Graton Community Service District’s (CSD) treatment facility, avoiding the need to transport raw sewage by truck through remote, hilly roads. According to the study, a collaboration between OCSD and Graton CSD would lower OCSD’s transportation costs, cut emissions from transporting wastewater, and improve the economy of scale for wastewater treatment and collection, which would benefit both districts economically. Long-term, this would stabilize rates while also lowering operational expenses.

The study also considered underground pipeline routes and found that the best option is a six-mile route from the OCSD pumping station near Bohemian Highway to Graton Road, then east along Graton Road to Ross Road. Estimated construction costs are between \$9.4 million and \$11.1 million, plus additional



costs for design, permitting, right-of-way, easements, and inspections.

To help pay for the costs, Senator Alex Padilla supported a successful request in the recently approved federal appropriations bill for \$1.45 million for pipeline design and preconstruction work. The design and environmental analysis process is anticipated to begin in 2023. Grant funding is needed to make the pipeline financially feasible. If funding is obtained, the pipeline construction is anticipated to take place between 2026 and 2028.

In October 2022, at a public meeting of the Occidental Community Services District, Sonoma Water staff described the feasibility study, costs, and proposed timeline for pipeline construction. Additional opportunities for public review and comments will be provided through the California Environmental Quality Act process.

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.

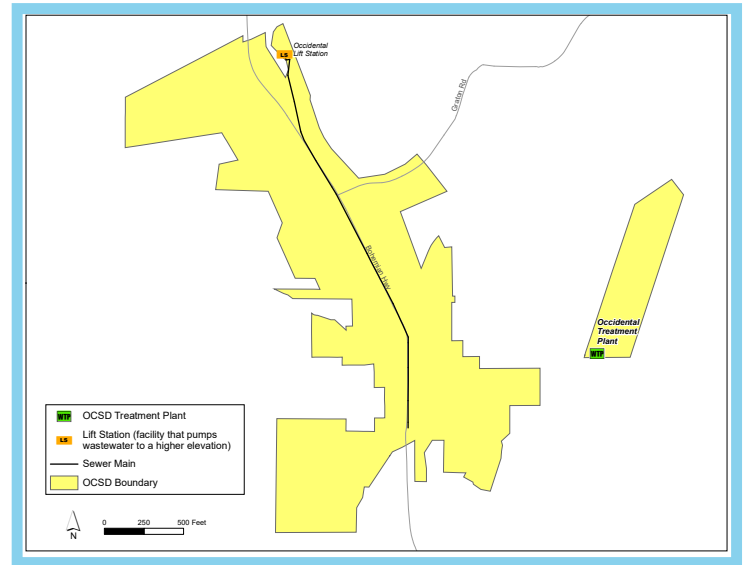
The District began operations in 1950. Currently, it serves 273 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings within a 55-acre service area. The sanitation facility trucks all wastewater to the Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup Treatment Plant for treatment and recycling.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Local hazard mitigation plans (LHMP) promote risk-based decision-making to protect people, property, and the economy from earthquakes, fires, and floods. For state, tribal, and municipal governments to receive pre- and post-disaster federal hazard mitigation funds, the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires a five-year LHMP. The LHMP is reviewed by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and requires Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) review and approval.

Sonoma Water is updating the 2018 LHMP with stakeholders. The LHMP planning process is as important as the plan itself and must include public and stakeholder input. The Sonoma Water LHMP includes a natural hazard and vulnerability assessment for its water supply system, flood protection infrastructure, and sanitation districts and zones systems.

If you are interested in following the LHMP preparation, approval, and adoption process or providing input, visit SonomaWater.org/LHMP. Drafts, staff reports, public hearing notices, and hazard maps, will be posted here for public review. You can submit questions or comments by sending an email to LHMP@scwa.ca.gov.



Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

LIHWAP offers a one-time payment to qualifying low-income households to help pay past due water or wastewater (sewer) bills. There is no date restriction for when the overdue amount occurred. The size of a benefit varies depending on the past due balance of the household's residential water and wastewater bills. Households that qualify could reduce their water and/or wastewater charges by up to \$2,000.

How do I apply?

Households can apply for LIHWAP assistance through the local LIHWAP service provider, North Coast Energy Services. Applications must be returned directly to the service provider. For more information and to apply visit

SonomaWater.org/sanitation-districts-and-zones.

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 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.

	FY22-23	FY23-24 Proposed
ESDs*	273	273
Annual Rate Per ESD	\$2,732	\$2,866
Annual Increase	\$128	\$134
Monthly Rate per ESD	\$227.67	\$238.83
Monthly Increase	\$10.67	\$11.17
Rate Increase	4.9%	4.9%
Increased Revenue	\$34,944	\$36,633

*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).

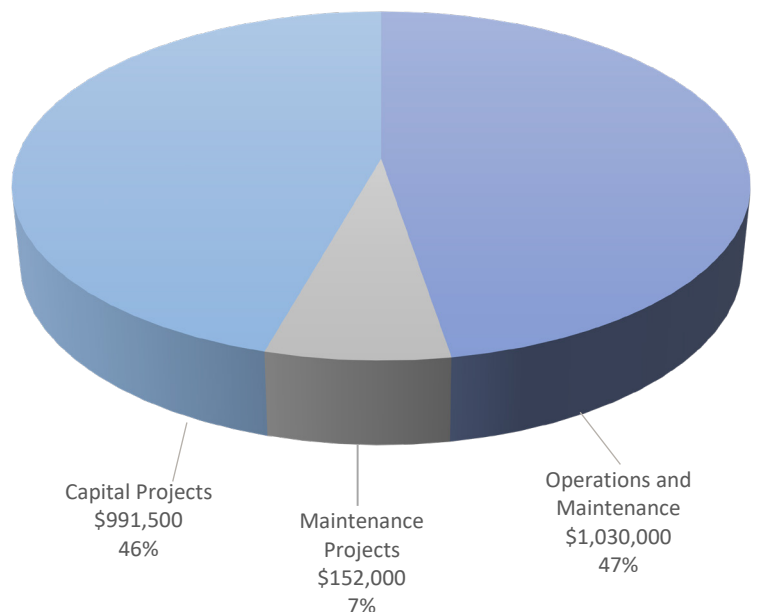
FY 2023-2024 Budgeted Expenditures \$2.2 Million

Capital Projects - \$991,500

- Lift Station Automation and Remote Monitoring – Preliminary Design
- Occidental - Graton Pipeline Preliminary Design

Maintenance Projects - \$152,000

- Pond Level Control and Treatment
- Lift Station and Trucking Site Operating Manual Update
- Regulatory Permitting Assistance
- SCADA Data and Communication Systems Improvements
- Sludge Removal



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: 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.



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



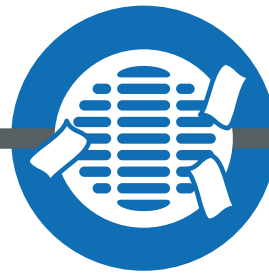
FLUSHED WIPES

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.



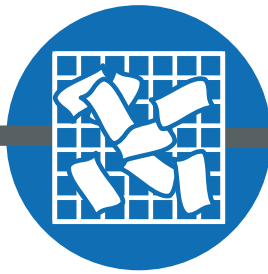
SEWER OVERFLOWS

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.



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SANITATION AGENCIES

CasaWeb.org/wipes

PROPOSITION 218

Occidental County Sanitation District

Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Proposed Sewer Service Rate Increase

Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On **May 16, 2023 at 1:40 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, 2023.

Please note: The public hearing will be held in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California. If the Board will offer a virtual option to accommodate public participation online, information regarding the virtual option 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 Rate Increase

Effective July 1, 2023, the District proposes to increase the Sewer Charge to \$2,866 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an increase of \$134 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 \$2,866 per ESD.

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

\$2,866 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 2023-24 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 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 obtaining copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2023-24: 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: [SonomaWater.org/ocsd](https://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, the protest must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 15, 2023 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 15, 2023 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, 2023

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

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 16, 2023 at 1:40 p.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 2023-2024 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 Alcantarillado
(Prop 218) incluida para el Distrito de Saneamiento del Condado
en Occidental

FECHA DE LA AUDIENCIA

16 de mayo de 2023 a las 1:40 p.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

**Aviso de la Proposición 218 de las tarifas de
alcantarillado propuestas para el año fiscal 2023-2024.**
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 están
disponibles en español en SonomaWater.org/espanol.



**Sonoma
Water**

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