



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Board of Supervisors - Fourth District

Subject: Ordinance Amending Sections 1.13.070 (A)(3), 7.20.220(B), and 7.20.440(A) of the Santa Cruz County Code Regarding Fines for Illegal Dumping

Meeting Date: May 20, 2025

Formal Title: Consider approving in concept an “Ordinance Amending Sections 1.13.070 (A)(3), 7.20.220(B), and 7.20.440(A) of the Santa Cruz County Code Regarding Fines for Illegal Dumping,” and take related actions.

Recommended Actions

1. Consider approving, in concept, an “Ordinance Amending Sections 1.13.070 (A)(3), 7.20.220(B), and 7.20.440(A) of the Santa Cruz County Code Regarding Fines for Illegal Dumping;” and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to schedule the ordinance for a second reading and final adoption on June 10, 2025; and
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish the Notice of Proposed Ordinance Summary in a newspaper of general circulation at least five days prior to the second reading and final adoption, no later than June 4, 2025, pursuant to Government Code Section 25124.

Executive Summary

Illegal dumping remains a persistent and increasing problem in Santa Cruz County, leading to environmental degradation and rising public cleanup costs. The current fine structure is outdated and significantly lower than those of neighboring jurisdictions, limiting its effectiveness as a deterrent. The proposed ordinance amendments seek to strengthen enforcement efforts by increasing penalties, clarifying enforcement, and aligning fines with those comparable counties to combat illegal dumping.

Discussion

Despite ongoing enforcement and services by various County departments, illegal dumping and littering continue to rise jeopardizing our environment and public health. The current penalty structure—\$100 for a first violation, \$200 for a second, and \$500 for a third within a year—is insufficient to deter violators.

A comparative analysis of neighboring jurisdictions illustrates that Santa Cruz County’s fines are significantly lower:

Location	1st Violation	2nd Violation	3rd Violation
San Benito County	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$10,000
Monterey County	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$10,000
San Jose, CA	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$10,000

Current fines as set forth in the Santa Cruz Code Section 1.13.070 (A), (1), (2), (3)(a), (b), and (c) as follows:

(A) As authorized under Government Code Section 25132 and Chapter 1.12 SCCC, the administrative penalties assessed for a violation of the County Code for which an administrative citation is issued shall be as set forth below. An administrative citation may be issued for one or more violations of the County Code. Each violation of the County Code included in an administrative citation shall be subject to an administrative penalty in the amount specified below.

- (1) If the person responsible fails to correct the violation, subsequent administrative citations may be issued for the same violation. The amount of the penalty shall increase at a rate specified in this chapter.
- (2) The administrative penalties assessed for a violation, or repeated violation, of a provision of this code concerning building or safety shall not exceed the amounts set forth in Government Code Section 25132 for that type of violation.
- (3) With the exception of cannabis licensing offenses (see Chapter 7.128 SCCC), the administrative penalties assessed for each violation, or repeated violation, of a provision of this code unrelated to building or safety shall not exceed the following amounts:
 - (a) First violation: \$100.00.
 - (b) Second violation within a one-year period: \$200.00.
 - (c) Third or subsequent violation within a one-year period: \$500.00.

To address this issue, the proposed amendments to Sections 1.13.070 (A)(3) (**Penalties Assessed**) 7.20.220(B) (**Enforcement Actions**), and 7.20.440(A) (**Violations and Penalties**) of the Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) Regarding Fines for Illegal Dumping, will change the fine amounts as follows:

- (a) First violation: ~~\$100.00~~ to \$2,500.00
- (b) Second violation within a one-year period: ~~\$200.00~~ to \$5,000.00
- (c) Third or subsequent violation within a one-year period: ~~\$500.00~~ to \$10,000.00.

Financial Impact

Adoption of this ordinance will not have a direct financial impact. Implementation, enforcement, and public outreach costs will be managed within existing department budgets.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Sustainable Environment

Submitted By:

Felipe Hernandez, Fourth District Supervisor

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.