



County of Santa Cruz

Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY -Call 711 www.scceh.com
EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us



AGENDA

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

Wednesday June 4, 2025, 4pm

This meeting will be held in hybrid format. Commissioners are expected to attend in person.

In-Person: 701 Ocean Street; **5th Floor Redwood Room**

Remote via Teams: [Join the meeting now](#) Meeting ID: 280 136 550 008 3 Passcode: sE6Mg6rB

Dial in by phone +1 831-454-2222 Phone conference ID: 720 117 288#

A. OPENING

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call

B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Opportunity for the public to comment on items under the purview of the Water Advisory Commission but not on today's agenda.

C. CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine in nature and will be acted upon in one motion. Specific items may be removed by members of the advisory body or public for separate consideration and discussion. Routine items that will be found on the consent agenda are meeting minutes, drought response updates, and Groundwater Sustainability Agency updates.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 4, 2025
2. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies

D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Opportunity for Commissioners to provide brief updates

E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. Intercommission Working Group

Provide guidance to staff as to the Commission's interest in reviving the Intercommission Working Group. Questions to consider: which commissions? Any specific topics?

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES

1. Domestic Well Water Quality Testing Program Updates

Update on the progress and results of the domestic well testing program kicked off in April of 2024.

Attachments:

- a. Staff Report
- b. Presentation

2. Draft Small Water System Support Guidebook

Provide feedback on the draft Guidebook for small water systems to use as a reference when considering water supply partnerships and possible consolidations.

Attachments:

- a. Draft Guide Book

H. CORRESPONDENCE

None

I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:

April 8, 2025

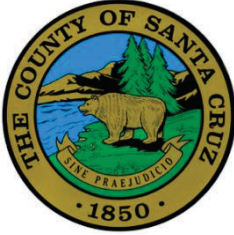
[Authorize the Director of General Services to file Claims Forms to participate in settlement of multi-district litigation against Tyco Fire Products LP, Chemguard, Inc., and BASF Corporation, and execute releases of claims against the defendants \(General Services Department\)](#)

J. ITEMS OF INTEREST

- <https://santacruzlocal.org/2025/05/23/unhealthy-tap-water-at-farmworker-housing-prompts-fixes/>
- <https://santacruzlocal.org/2025/04/07/county-seeks-payout-water-contamination/>
- [Measure Q Citizens Oversight Advisory Board website](#)

K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

L. ADJOURNMENT



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Water Advisory Commission

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Minutes

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

Wednesday April 2, 2025, 4:00 PM

This meeting will be held in hybrid format. Commissioners are expected to attend in person.
In-Person: 701 Ocean Street; **Fifth Floor Redwood Room** Remote via Teams

A. OPENING

1. Call to Order 4:02 PM
2. Roll Call

Commissioner	Attendance
Frank Cheap (1)	Present
Vacant Seat (2)	N/A
Linda A. Wilson (3)	Present
Brian Lockwood (4)	Present
Vacant Seat (5)	N/A
Paul G. Lego, Chair – Rep. of Private or Mutual Water Companies)	Present
Nate Gillespie – Rep. of Public Water Purveyors	Present

County Staff present: Sierra Ryan, Sean Abbey, Kevin Harmon, Erin McCarthy, Nathan Salazar, Alyson Tom

3. Elections of Officers as outlined in Santa Cruz County Code 2.38.120:

- (1) Commission officers shall be elected during the commission's first meeting

after the commission is established at which a majority of the members are present. Annually, thereafter, commission officers shall be elected during the first meeting in April, or if the commission does not meet in April, at the next subsequent meeting. Commission officers may serve for up to two consecutive years and shall be eligible to serve again after a one- year “sit-out” period.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Gillespie as Chair by Commissioner Lockwood, seconded by Commissioner Cheap. Unanimous approval.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Lockwood as Vice Chair by Commissioner Cheap, seconded by Commissioner Lego. Unanimous approval.

B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Becky Steinbruner- Rob Swartz with the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) has been doing some work focusing on rising chloride levels in the Seascapes area. She tried to convince the MGA to have a second helicopter travel the same flight path as the monitoring done in 2017 to establish changes in groundwater quality in the Mid-County basin. There was a well drilled in the 80s for the purpose of monitoring saltwater intrusion. She is disappointed in the lack of a new study being done before the Pure Water Soquel project is implemented.

C. CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine in nature and will be acted upon in one motion. Specific items may be removed by members of the advisory body or public for separate consideration and discussion. Routine items that will be found on the consent agenda are meeting minutes, drought response updates, and Groundwater Sustainability Agency updates.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for February 5, 2025
2. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
3. Drought Response and DROP implementation update

No comments or discussion. Motion to approve consent agenda by Commissioner Lockwood, seconded by Commissioner Cheap. Unanimous approval.

D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioners agreed to forego their reports to preserve time for the consolidation

workshop.

E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. Small Water Systems Consolidation Workshop

1. Background (Sierra Ryan)

- a. SB 552 requirements for counties and role in consolidations
- b. DROP language and grant for locally relevant materials and guides
- c. SB 1188 and SB 552 requirements
- d. Introduce presentations and Q&A process

Question: Do you know where the State Water Board is on developing regulations for SB 1188?

Answer: Have not heard the current status.

Q: Do you know if the SB 552 requirements apply to small /smallest public water systems? Down to 15 connections?

A: SB 552 water system requirements only apply to community water systems and nontransient-noncommunity systems that are schools. County drought planning requirements are primarily focused on the other types of water systems and private well owners.

Q: Where are the fire code requirements found?

A: Usually in the building codes, applying these standards to larger scale water systems is a challenge. They do not scale well by connection when comparing requirements for a single home to a water supplier for many residences. Typically, water systems are only required to comply with fire flow requirements in place when the system was established. They are usually grandfathered in for future fire flow and fire storage requirements, similar when the building code changes, existing buildings do not need to be upgraded.

Q (Cheap): Do we know if the State Water Board has reached out to water systems before they come out with specific regulations?

A: No- if any systems have heard from the state on this, that would be helpful for us to know.

Q (Cheap): Do we know if any water systems were consulted or involved in the creation of that bill?

A: None that we know of.

Comment (attendee): New drought-related questions being asked in Electronic Annual Report (EAR).

Lego: SB 1188 requires the State Water Board to collect input/feedback before setting standards. Need to keep an eye on this so the standards are feasible.

SB 1188 applies to a big range of water systems based on size, do not want to see standards driven up to unreachable levels for smaller systems due to the capabilities of larger systems (up to 10,000 connections).

2. County's Consolidation Feasibility GIS Analysis (Kevin Harmon)
 - a. Physical
 - b. Technical-Managerial-Financial (drive time)

Q (virtual meeting chat): Are costs allocated by ratio of number of connections? Is there an overlap?

Comment (attendee): Costs are currently higher than listed in this analysis for consolidation pipeline from San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD) to Forest Springs and Bracken Brae.

Q (Lockwood): Shared pipeline opportunities listed in the analysis- would that be a shared trench with a single pipeline, or two pipelines in the same trench?

A: Single pipeline

Q (Lego): On the difference between physical and managerial consolidation; physical is connecting pipes, and an example of managerial consolidation would be that Soquel Creek Water District takes over and manages their business, but the smaller system still owns the facilities and sources?

A: More of a shared cost approach for expenses such as certified operators and business/financial managers.

SB 552 sets a deadline of 2032 for metering each service connection.

The state does have up to \$5 million in funding for each larger system to consolidate a smaller system.

Comment (attendee): Many issues stem from agricultural water users in the Central Valley overtaxing water supplies and from population growth more than climate change, which is indeed a real issue but less of a contributor than the state has stated.

Comment (attendee): Perspective from a Forest Springs (FS) board member and resident- they currently have intertie connections to BBWC and SLVWD. Project to upgrade main to connect FS and Bracken Brae with 10 and 12-inch mains, the cost is already well over \$4 million. One of the biggest questions is whether you have a distribution system in the system being consolidated that is viable. FS distribution system is on the older side, looking like the project will be over \$30 million when all is said and done. Advantages- steady water supply, not viable for the neighborhood to maintain compliance on its own. However, it is also not feasible to expect a small system to handle the \$30 million price tag, the state needs to step up.

Gillespie: Cost estimate for pipeline installation has been closer to \$300-\$500 per linear foot currently.

Q: Map of private wells did not show Pine Tree Lane, Bluff Residents, or private wells in the area near New Brighton.

A: Bluff Residents now an Individual Water System (1-4 connections), parcels not served by a regulated water system will not be shown on the map.

3. LAFCO roles/steps for physical connection (Joe Serrano)
 - i. ESA for emergency intertie
 - ii. Annexation of a small system into a big system

Q: Are financial analyses within LAFCO's purview?

A: No, but LAFCO is not restricted from assessing financial options and resources, developed a report for Big Basin Water Company (BBWC) to review their governance options. Also helped to connect Moonshot Missions to BBWC. Moonshot then completed the work and final report on long-term options for BBWC free of charge.

Q: How did you find Moonshot?

A: Hired Piret Harmon, former Scotts Valley Water District General Manager, as consultant, who knew someone from Moonshot and that they may be able to help with that type of analysis. One of the Moonshot employees also lived near/within BBWC.

Q: We know that LAFCO has helped with some consolidation studies for fire districts/agencies. Would LAFCO be willing to help with something similar for water systems?

A: Yes, LAFCO would definitely be interested in helping with this.

4. Guidebook development and Survey (Sean Abbey)
 - a. Survey results

b. Discussion:

- 1) What assistance is needed/where should we focus our work?
- 2) What should we be communicating to the State?

Comment (attendee): Issue is that there is a lack of knowledge of what to do to move consolidation process forward. Do not know where to start. Legal guidance and other types of guidance needed.

Legal assistance is a large need, most systems cannot afford the rates attorneys charge.

Would be helpful to publish current standards for water systems that would need to be met before consolidation, for example with Soquel Creek Water District. Forming an assessment district/benefit assessment district is easier than a standard assessment district (50% protest vs. 50%+1 in approval vote)

Comment (attendee): As a small public water system, Forest Springs has been able to use some helpful legal/technical resources. Technical assistance- Moonshot is one source but cannot provide legal advice. To use Moonshot's services, they have a grant from the EPA, Forest Springs qualified because about 1/3 of their homes burned in the CZU fire and their infrastructure was damaged. Most of their criteria are unfortunately tied to DAC status. CRWA and Cal Mutuals have offered free technical assistance if you apply and fit their eligibility criteria. Biggest hurdle is definitely the lack of DAC status and median income. Issues with long-time homeowners on small amounts of Social Security and cannot afford large expenses. Households with younger residents, including tech workers. FS constantly struggles with how to fund projects without being punitive for the group of residents that cannot afford large costs. SLVWD has been a great consolidation partner. They understand how to administer grants, has systems in place to handle accounting. Important question is how does a non-DAC system obtain a large enough grant to fund a consolidation project?

What other types of assistance could we provide with consolidations/related projects?

- Funding, and access to funding!
- Guidance on processes, requirements.
- Need to provide feedback to the state that consolidations cannot proceed without funding.

Steinbruner: Laird's bill (1188) has a significant focus on reserve funds, concern that this will put a lot of systems under intense scrutiny and pressure.

Comment (in meeting chat):

1. ChatGPT offers these options, which are almost all about underserved communities per Karen's observations:
2. **Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP):** RCAP offers technical assistance, training, and financial resources to rural communities across the United States, aiming to improve water, wastewater, and solid waste infrastructure. [US EPA](#)

DigDeep: This human rights nonprofit focuses on ensuring that every American has clean, running water and adequate sanitation. They work on collaborative projects to address water access challenges in underserved communities.

[DIGDEEP](#)

xWater Finance Exchange (WFX): WFX assists small water suppliers in securing financing for infrastructure projects, addressing challenges faced by low-income communities in funding water system improvements. [DIGDEEP+6Public Policy Institute of California+6Stanford Law School+6](#)

- **US Water Alliance:** A nonprofit organization committed to advancing sustainable water policies and programs across the United States, focusing on building cross-sector partnerships to address water challenges. [sillylily](#)
- **Water Engineers for the Americas (WEFTA):** WEFTA is a nonprofit organization that provides design and funding for clean water and basic sanitation systems in Latin American communities, focusing on sustainable and community-driven projects. [Wikipedia+8Wikipedia+8US EPA+8](#)

3. Assistance from SCC: Feasibility about which other systems to approach to consider consolidation (obviously close by, but when there are several getting advice), and any models of the TMF collaborations that are working.

Comment: Templates would be helpful!

\$330/foot many years ago (Owen/San Andreas MWC)

Would be helpful to follow up with Trout Gulch to get more details on their pipeline installation cost (~\$220/foot for 6-inch C900)

Comment: Systems being pushed toward non-compliance with increased reporting burden, for example drought reporting requirements that do not benefit water system, rather take away from their time running the system. There are many advantages that small systems have over larger systems, such as the ability to directly inspect each connection, which is not feasible for systems as large as Soquel Creek Water District.

Comment: significant drop in involvement with the water system. There is no one to replace him if he is no longer around.

Lego: At a macro level, when we send this information to the state, we can look at the larger cost of the pipe, you can roughly use \$50,000 per connection plus intertie cost for the cost of consolidation.

Comment (in chat): Excellent point – we either have been here a long time and have collaborative neighbors – or new people, including absentee landlords – and we inherit an aging system.

Comment: Increasing treatment costs, need county's continued support for POE/POU treatment.

Comment: There are large private water companies that own small systems over a large area, including in San Benito County. If there were a number of small systems within the county that are not able to function, that might attract some larger companies to run these systems.

Other advise caution for this approach.

Environmental Health is aiming to complete a draft guidebook in the fall, must be submitted to the state in December along with a final report.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES

None

H. CORRESPONDENCE

No Discussion

I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:

No Discussion

J. ITEMS OF INTEREST

No Discussion

K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- Intercommission Working Group

L. ADJOURNMENT 6:05 PM