

SCMU Review

(schmoo ri-vyoo) n. items of interest and information from your Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities

No.73 SUMMER 2022 SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL UTILITIES 212 LOCUST STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831)420-5220 scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

Director's Message



**WATER IS H₂O.
WHAT IS H₂O₄?**
Why, bathing and drinking — of course!

WHAT DID THE SINK SAY TO THE TAP?
You're a real drip!

WHAT DID ONE RAINDROP SAY TO ANOTHER?
Two's company, three's a cloud!

We try our darnedest to make information about your water system engaging. To make it interesting, to make it relatable. We throw in a little humor from time to time, and heck — we've even stooped to using photos of cute puppies to try to get your attention.

Despite that, we understand that as long as you have clean, safe water available by merely turning on your tap, you've probably got better things to do than think about water. So we do the thinking about reliable water supply for you.

But we've been doing a lot more than just think about reliable water supply! For the past six years, we've been investing millions into your water system to upgrade, modernize, and climate-proof it to ensure that your kids, and their kids, don't ever have to think about water supply, either.

Jokes about water aside, after all these years of preparing the water system to support new supply sources, we're getting very close to bringing projects to Council for approval. An important first step will be for Council to create the new policy that will ensure that a final plan is actually implemented. Read on to learn why that's important.

One final note about water supply — because of your ongoing commitment to use ours wisely, Santa Cruz is exempted from many of the restrictions other California communities will face this summer. When it comes to efficient water use, Santa Cruz really is exceptional. Please just keep doing what you're doing!

Rosemary Menard

2022 WATER USE RESTRICTIONS

While much of the rest of the state's water use has trended upward, the City of Santa Cruz's exemplary water use efficiency, and reliance on only local water resources, have earned the city an exemption from the majority of restrictions imposed by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) on water agencies state-wide.

FACED WITH A THIRD YEAR OF SEVERE DROUGHT, Governor Newsom recently ordered water purveyors across the state to escalate their response to ongoing drought. However Santa Cruz, in addition to already outperforming the target use of 55 gallons per person per day, also surpassed much of the state with rainfall totals.

Because of these factors, the state exempted the city from imposing further restrictions, including new restrictions on businesses already struggling to recover from Covid-19 impacts.

With that said, a state-wide ban on watering non-essential turf in commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors will still apply to Santa Cruz water customers, as will a ban on any outdoor watering between the hours of 10 am and 6 pm. Santa Cruz must also impose a state rule limiting landscape irrigation to no more than two days per week.



While many reservoirs across the state are well below 50 percent capacity — some as low as 25 percent — Santa Cruz's reservoir sits at close to 90 percent full. That means even if we have another dry year, if we continue to be good stewards of our water resources and use our supply efficiently, we have enough to get us through next year.

Santa Cruz's ongoing commitment to using water efficiently has been viewed as a model, and has resulted in an exemption from what would have placed significantly greater hardship on our city than most.

Our community just needs to keep doing what we've come to do naturally — which is to respect our water resources and use them wisely.



Water Supply Ideas Convention, 2014

A History of Water Supply Projects in Santa Cruz

“Why don’t you just ... _____ ?”

We’d like to have a dollar for every time someone has asked us about water supply with that opening.

“Why don’t you just put a dam on Zayante Creek?”

“Why don’t you just make everyone use compost toilets?”

“Why don’t you just build a desal plant?”

“Why don’t you just use recycled water?”

“Why don’t you just tap into the state water project?”

“Why don’t you just collect the water from fog?”

...et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

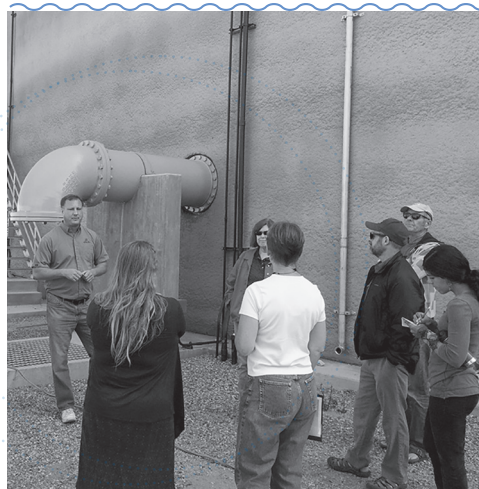
Because Santa Cruz has suffered from water shortages for decades (since the 1970s, in fact), people sometimes assume the city never tried to solve the problem. *Au contrair*. There have been many attempts to address the city’s supply challenges, but all have been shelved for one reason or another. Let’s take a little stroll down Water Supply Studies Memory Lane.

1985 – 1989

In June 1985, a Joint Powers Authority prepared the North Santa Cruz County Water Master Plan, which focused on regional opportunities to supplement all local supplies, as well as some city-only alternatives. Opportunities focused on increasing the city’s reliance on local groundwater (vs. surface water). Studies concluded that there were insufficient local groundwater supplies to meet the city’s needs.

1989 – 1997

Studies during this period focused on upgrades and improvements to the city’s supply system infrastructure to increase water storage. These included proposals to dam Zayante Creek, Baldwin Creek, Jamison Creek, Bear Creek, and others, as well as enlarging the city’s existing reservoir, Loch Lomond. New opportunities for groundwater were explored, as were interties with regional water districts, and wastewater reclamation. None of these solutions panned out due to insufficient supply, costs, and concerns about the environmental impacts of blocking streams to build dams.



WSAC learning about the water system, 2014

1997 – 2013

As interest in new ways to use groundwater continued, the city’s water rights surfaced as a significant obstacle. Use of abandoned quarries for storage was studied and found technically infeasible. Ways to maximize existing sources by increasing the city’s treatment capacity made headway, as did water conservation — with routine peak-season restrictions of up to 15 percent a tool for long-term demand management. Seawater desalination rose to the top of preferred supply strategies, with the capacity to provide enough supply and to partner with Soquel Creek Water District on cost and implementation.

2013 – 2015

Lack of community support for desalination led the City Council to shelve the project and instead create a community advisory body to address the city’s supply challenges. The Water Supply Advisory Committee (WSAC) kicked off their process with a Water Supply Convention, where the public was invited to present their solutions to supply shortfalls. The WSAC met for hundreds of hours over eighteen months to learn about the city’s water system and the gap to be met with new supply, as well as to hear from experts on supply alternatives, new technologies, costs and yields, and climate change.

2015 – PRESENT

The WSAC presented the City Council with several supplemental water supply recommendations in fall of 2015. With unanimous support from the Council, Water Department staff were directed to thoroughly study, vet, and test the recommended strategies to a level where a final decision could be made on which to implement. Those strategies include storing excess winter surface water, when available, in local depleted groundwater basins; storing purified recycled water in groundwater basins; water exchanges, when available, with regional agencies; using desalinated seawater.

NEXT STEP

This fall, the Water Department will provide the City Council with a set of policy recommendations to support ongoing action to secure our water future. These policies are being designed to provide durable direction for incremental implementation of water supply projects. The policies will identify the types of projects to be pursued, as well as the community values and other considerations used to select them. This is a critical step to secure our water future and we encourage the community to stay informed and to get involved!

Curbside Food Scraps Collection Program Roll Out



Seabright Resident Vivian Vargas participated in our Food Scraps Collection Pilot Program.

Our Curbside Food Scraps Collection Program will soon be serving all eligible City of Santa Cruz residents and businesses to help with compliance on the new statewide regulation, SB 1383. This climate-friendly law is designed to reduce methane emissions from decomposing food in landfills.



A 6-gallon locking pail will be delivered to single-family residents for food scraps collection on the same day as trash/recycling pickups.

Collected food scraps will be turned into mash that is processed into animal feed.

THE ILLUSTRATION ABOVE details what can and cannot be placed in the pail. City of Santa Cruz food scraps may not be co-mingled with yard waste collections.

Further details, including a video demonstration are available at www.cityofsantacruz.com/foodwaste

Recycling Center Tours Are Back!



After a long pandemic break, summer tours of our Resource Recovery Facility at 605 Dimeo Lane are scheduled every Friday, July 29 through August 26. The 90-minute tours, offered at 10 am and 1 pm each day, provide opportunity to learn about the multifaceted recycling process as well as our new food scraps processing and Household Hazardous Waste Program.

Children must be at least eight years old, and youth up to age 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Reservations are required!

Reserve your spot today at www.cityofsantacruz.com/tours

New "NIST SRM 2917" Standard to Improve Pollution Measurements

This new standardized reference material can also be used to support storm water management, food production monitoring, wastewater surveillance and outbreak exposure route identification.



We are proud that our City Environmental Laboratory was one of 16 laboratories across the country selected for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) successful validation testing in the development of a standard to improve pollution measurements in recreational waters.

You can read more at www.cityofsantacruz.com/publicworks



SCMU Review No. 73, Summer 2022
Eileen Cross, Editor
Written and published twice a year by
City of Santa Cruz Municipal Utilities
212 Locust Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
www.cityofsantacruz.com
Customer Service: (831) 420-5220
scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
SANTA CRUZ, CA
PERMIT NO. 11

Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant Improvements Project Proposed

We are proposing a project to upgrade our existing Water Treatment Plant located at 715 Graham Hill Road in Santa Cruz.

We will hold two online public scoping meetings regarding the proposed project via Zoom on July 19, 2022 at 3:30 PM and 5:30 PM. The meetings will include a brief overview of the proposed project and the CEQA environmental process.

A 30-day public review period for the proposed project's Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report will run from June 27, 2022 through July 26, 2022.

For more information, please visit www.cityofsantacruz.com/fip or contact Jessica Martinez-McKinney, Associate Planner II at jmartinezmckinney@cityofsantacruz.com

SECURING OUR WATER FUTURE

What's the Next Step, and Why is It Important?

THE NEXT STEP

This fall, the Water Department will provide City Council with policy recommendations to secure our water future. As you read in "A History of Santa Cruz Water Supply", the city has a record of studying supplemental supply solutions, with little success in implementing them. Never before, however, has the city considered the breadth and depth of supply projects that the Water Supply Advisory Committee (WSAC) considered, and never before have the impacts of climate change created such an urgent need to solve our supply problem.

Time is not on our side — we can't conserve our way out of climate change. We need to act now.

The policies we will ask City Council to approve will basically commit the City to implementing a set of well vetted projects and a course of action. This commitment will enable the Water Department to move from studying the

feasibility of projects (based on criteria like yield, cost, etc.) to creating a detailed roadmap to implement them.

WHY IS NEW POLICY AN IMPORTANT NEXT STEP?

An adopted city policy will provide durable direction needed to ensure supply projects are implemented, not planned and shelved. Unlike supply proposals of the past, the current proposed projects surfaced from dozens provided by community members as well as water professionals. Every idea was on the table. After hundreds of hours of public WSAC meetings and years of feasibility studies, the projects being proposed to Council rose to the top as "most likely to succeed." We're confident that the projects included in the policies we'll propose to Council best meet the community's needs.

We hope that the community will follow and participate in this next important step to secure our water future.

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ WATER DEPARTMENT

2021 Consumer Confidence Report

The City of Santa Cruz Water Department is pleased to report that your drinking water meets or exceeds all United States Environmental Protection Agency and State Water Resources Control Board – Division of Drinking Water drinking water health standards.

The 2021 Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is available for your review. This report contains information regarding our water sources, detected contaminants, compliance and educational information.

To view the 2021 Consumer Confidence Report and to learn more about your drinking water, please visit: www.cityofsantacruz.com/ccr2021

If you would like a paper copy of the 2021 CCR mailed to your mailing address, please call (831) 420-5220. If you would like to speak with someone about the report, please call (831) 420-5480.

Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable. Tradúzcalo o hable con alguien que lo entienda bien.