

SCMU Review

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

No.75 SPRING 2023 SANTA CRUZ MUNICIPAL UTILITIES 212 LOCUST STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831)420-5220 scmu@cityofsantacruz.com

Director's Message



WE GOT KINDA SICK OF THE RAIN THIS YEAR.

(OK, really sick of it.) In one of my favorite poems, e.e. cummings' "In Just -", he describes spring as

"mud-luscious" and "puddle-wonderful." I think I speak for many of us when I say that we've had our fill of mud and puddles, and the novelty of their wonder and lusciousness wore off in about mid-February. Welcome spring, bring on summer!

We know we may sound fickle — one year complaining about not enough rain, the next complaining about too much — but it's really challenging to provide clean, safe, reliable water 24/7 when source water is too murky to treat, falling trees and landslides break pipes, electricity is unreliable, and storms damage access to critical infrastructure.

Speaking of murky water, this issue of the *SCMU Review* will provide you with yet another clever conversation starter:

"Say, do you know how many Nephelometric Turbidity Units the San Lorenzo River is running at?"

If we had you at *Nephelometric Turbidity Units*, read on to learn what it means so you can impress your dinner companions!

Mud, puddles, and storm damage aside, the arrival of spring means the reopening of Loch Lomond Recreation Area (LLRA), and the return of our annual watershed education programs. Have you been to Loch Lomond? Modesty aside, we think it rivals any of the beautiful parks in Santa Cruz County, and that's saying a lot! Peek inside to see some of the fun things you can do up there this summer.

Rosemary Menard
Water Director

SPEAKING OF MUD PUDDLES

TURBIDITY, AKA CLOUDINESS OR MURKINESS OF FLUID, IS MEASURED IN NEPHELOMETRIC TURBIDITY UNITS (yes, it's a mouthful, so the industry calls them NTUs). Locally, source water (also known as "raw,") under 10 NTU before treatment is considered low turbidity, which means it's cleaner to start and easier to treat. Because of the power of many of the storms we had this winter, the San Lorenzo River was often well over 50 NTU and even over 100 NTU on occasion.

Operators at the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant use specific criteria to determine which water source to use. San Lorenzo River typically has the highest NTU during storms, and Loch Lomond Reservoir the lowest.

We've relied on water from Loch Lomond often this year, but even reservoir water had challenging turbidity this winter.

If you've kept prior issues of the *SCMU Review* (my mom keeps hers in a scrap book), you could go back a couple of issues to review all the steps we take to protect the watershed and keep source waters clean. But despite our efforts, with the severity of this winter's storms high turbidity was

unavoidable and an ongoing challenge for treatment from all of our surface sources.

Thankfully, one of the major projects being funded by the WIFIA loan (see "What the Heck is a WIFIA?" on the back page) is the Facility Improvement Project, which will dramatically improve our ability to use and treat even exceptionally turbid water. The FIP is an extremely complex project as it will completely remodel and upgrade the Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant while the plant is operating.

Designers compare the project to fixing a bike while riding it.

Construction is expected to begin in 2025 at a cost of \$126 million.



Protecting Our Watersheds is Everyone's Job!

SPRING AT LOCH LOMOND MEANS THE RETURN of our watershed education programs. All of Santa Cruz's drinking water comes from local sources, most of it from rivers and streams, and a small amount from local groundwater. Protecting the watersheds where our water comes from helps ensure that source water is as safe and clean as possible before it's treated. The Water Department offers free, science-based programs for Santa Cruz and San Lorenzo Valley students to learn how they can care for their watersheds.

Fifth grade students from Santa Cruz schools spend a day exploring where their water comes from, what species share the watershed, and how their actions can affect water quality and quantity.

These free programs include a school assembly, transportation to field trips in Henry Cowell State Park and Loch Lomond Recreation Area, and resources for teachers.

In partnership with Coastal Watershed Council, the Water Department leads programs for San Lorenzo Valley Elementary and Middle School students to learn about environmental science, endangered species, and watershed protection.

Watershed Academy is offered to a small group of San Lorenzo Valley High School students who want to take a deeper dive into environmental science and local water resource management. Much of the program is spent in the field to understand watershed processes, fisheries, land use, and drinking water source protection.

Bonny Doon Elementary School has been awarded an annual watershed science grant to engage students in activities related to drinking water source protection and endangered species issues. This program uses classroom teaching, demonstrations, and hands-on activities specifically focused on the North Coast watersheds.

Our Watershed team provides a variety of other miscellaneous school programs, co-hosts the annual State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium, and participates in several local watershed and fisheries-related events. Join them on one of the upcoming Loch Walks at Loch Lomond Recreation Area! You can learn more about the walks here:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/water/watershed/loch-lomond-recreation

Lake Enthusiasts Agree — Loch Lomond is the Most Beautiful Lake in Santa Cruz County!

OK, SO MAYBE LOCH LOMOND IS ONE OF ONLY A FEW SMALL LAKES IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY. That doesn't make it any less beautiful, or special! Have you been there?

Loch Lomond is a man-made reservoir, damming Newell Creek at its southern end. Built in the 1960s, it still serves as the City of Santa Cruz's only significant water storage. It also serves as a regional recreation area, with picnic areas, hiking trails, boat and kayak rentals, and fishing.

Join an interpretive tour of the lake on the "Newell Jewel" pontoon boat this summer, offered during the second weekend of each month. Tours are offered 11 am–noon on both Saturdays and Sundays and can hold up to 25 people. Sign up at the Park Store.

Also in the line-up this summer, monthly natural history "Loch Walks." Walks scheduled for this summer include:

- **MAY 27**
Native Flora with botanist Andy Werner
- **JULY 29**
Great American Secchi Dip In with City of Santa Cruz staff
- **AUGUST 19**
Cultural History of the San Lorenzo Valley with historian Lisa Robinson and archaeologist Mark Hylkema
- **SEPTEMBER 16**
Fire Ecology with forester Steve Butler
- **OCTOBER 7**
Fall Birding with ornithologist Jeff Smith

Walks are free of charge. Please call (831) 335-7424 to make a reservation, or sign up in the Park Store the day of the event. For more information about Loch Lomond Recreation Area, visit the webpage at:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/water/watershed/loch-lomond-recreation



Santa Cruz fifth grade students explore and draw maps of the watersheds from which our drinking water comes, and learn how their actions affect water quality and quantity.

Free Tours of the Recycling Center

EVER WONDER HOW EVERYTHING in your blue bin gets sorted and processed? Visit our Recycling Center at the Resource Recovery Facility, 605 Dimeo Lane, any Friday from June 16 through August 25 at 10 am and 1 pm. Our action-packed 90-minute tour will give you the inside scoop on how we recycle 36 tons of material every single weekday.

You will also experience our new food scraps processing operation that is reducing methane emissions from the landfill and learn about our Household Hazardous Waste Program.



Pre-registration is required. Tours are limited to 20 people. Children must be at least 8 years old. Youth ages 8 to 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Carpooling is encouraged as parking is limited.

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

Questions may be addressed to:
csoon@santacruzca.gov

We hope to see you there!



Community Invited to Industrial Users Local Discharge Limits Discussion

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE PROGRAM invites the community to participate in a Local Discharge Limits/Enhanced Source Control Update on Wednesday, June 14, from 4 to 8 pm, at London Nelson Community Center, 301 Center Street. The event fosters an open discussion to help set industrial users' standards and regulations for their discharge into the Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment System.

As mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Act to ensure that the environment is protected and no one is exposed to harmful levels of any compounds, Local Discharge Limits and Enhanced Source Control for the Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment System must be updated frequently. All wastewater treatment systems are limited on

what they can treat based on their technologies. They must comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting limits to support community welfare and sustainability.

After presentations by City Environmental Compliance, Santa Cruz County, and Kennedy Jenks staff, the local community and industry members are invited to weigh in on the scientific findings of the City and County of Santa Cruz with their questions and concerns. The goal of this discussion is to inform the best possible update of Local Discharge Limits and Enhanced Source Control for the Santa Cruz Wastewater System.

Sandwiches and beverages will be provided for up to 70 dischargers and stakeholders.





SCMU Review No. 75, Spring 2023
 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

What the Heck is a WIFIA?

IF YOU'VE EVER HAD TO DO ANY REMODELING TO YOUR HOME, you know that it's expensive and costs add up fast. Homeowners often shop around for the best deal on loans to get the lowest interest rate, stretch payments out, and make improvements more affordable.

That's just what a Water Department team did to help finance many of the water system's needed upgrades. Except that this loan application process took *four years*, and at \$127 million, the loan is waaaaay bigger than an average home remodel.

The loan comes from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program, and the application process included detailed project plans, information about the Department's financial status, customer base, water use, and rates. When the loan closes in May, the interest rate is expected to be about 3.75 percent which is much better compared to the current 6.8 percent for a 30-year mortgage.

Water rates around the country are going up, as aging infrastructure needs to be replaced and upgraded. It's an issue that we've been paying close attention to and looking for ways to address. We can't postpone needed upgrades any longer, and there's not much we can do about their cost. But qualifying for significant loans like WIFIA reduces the burden on our rate payers. The WIFIA loan is the latest in a series of low interest loans obtained by the Water Department to finance necessary upgrades to the water system.

Another reason to extend payments over time, besides making payments more affordable, is because the improvements being made today will benefit the next generations of Santa Cruz residents. By stretching payments out, everyone who enjoys clean, safe, reliable, and affordable water will pay their fair share.

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ WATER DEPARTMENT 2022 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 California State Water Resources Control Board — Division of Drinking Water drinking water health standards.

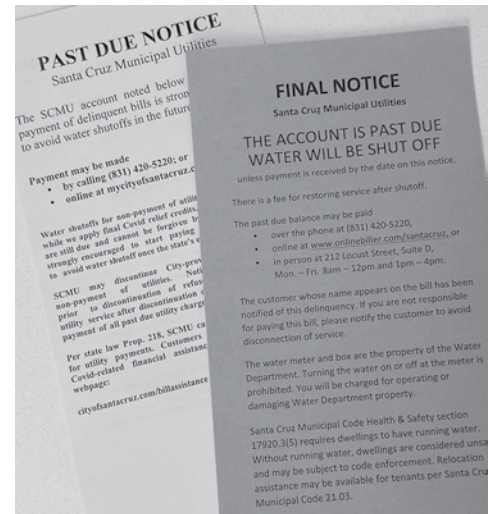
The 2022 Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is available for your review. This report contains information regarding our water sources, levels of detected constituents, water quality compliance, and educational information. To view the 2022 Consumer Confidence Report and to learn more about your drinking water, please visit:

www.cityofsantacruz.com/ccr2022

If you would like a paper copy of the 2022 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.*

**Garage Sale Weekend
 June 3 - 4**
 Save the date!

Help the environment by reducing waste.
 Host or visit a garage sale.
cityofsantacruz.com/garagesales



Shut Offs for Nonpayment Resume in May

CUSTOMERS WITH DELINQUENT WATER BILL payments received their last courtesy notice in April that shut offs for nonpayment will resume in May. SCMU has not shut off for nonpayment since the start of the pandemic, however, field staff have been posting delinquency door hangers for the past 18 months, encouraging customers to pay down their past due balance.

In the meantime, several forms of rate assistance have been made available for late-paying customers, including two rounds of Covid arrearage payments, Covid rent relief (including utilities), and the Low-Income Household Water/Wastewater Assistance Program (LIHWAP). Once shut offs resume, law requires that SCMU offer payment arrangements for qualifying low-income customers and — for non-low-income customers — SCMU will consider offering payment arrangements to customers facing extenuating financial circumstances, such as unexpected costs due to recent storm damage. If you have questions about payment options, please call Customer Assistance at (831) 420-5220.