

Occidental County Sanitation District  
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency  
404 Aviation Blvd.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

## IMPORTANT

**Sewer service fee NOTICE  
(Prop 218) Enclosed:  
Occidental County  
Sanitation District**

Hearing Date:  
**May 19, 2015**

**10:00 am**

Hearing Location:  
**575 Administration Drive,  
Room 102A, Santa Rosa, CA**

## Important Customer Information Inside!

- ✓ Proposed Sewer Rates
- ✓ Upcoming Public Hearing
- ✓ Rate Protest Form

## PROPOSITION 218 NOTICE

Included in this issue is the **Proposition 218 Notice** for the Occidental County Sanitation District's proposed Fiscal Year 2015-2016 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.

For more information, visit  
[www.sonomacountywater.org/OCSD](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/OCSD).

Securing our Future by Investing in our Water Resources, Environment & Community

[www.sonomacountywater.org/OCSD](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/OCSD)



# OCCIDENTAL COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT

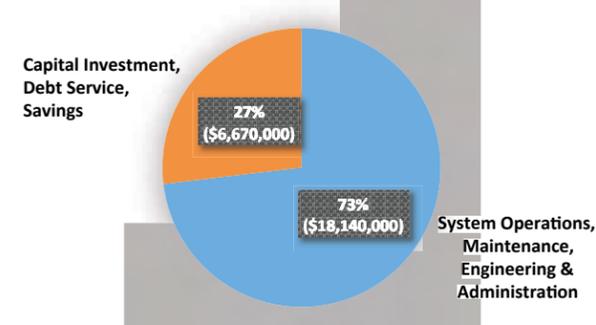
**NEWS**  
SPRING 2015  
Vol. 3, Issue #1

## RATES GO DIRECTLY TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN COMMUNITY'S SANITATION DISTRICT FACILITIES

There are eight sanitation systems in Sonoma County that are operated by the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency). Fees collected from ratepayers are used to collect wastewater from homes and businesses, turn this wastewater into recycled water, and then release this water back into streams or provide it to others for outdoor irrigation. The recycled water produced by the various treatment plants in this process must meet numerous regulatory requirements aimed at protecting public health, water quality and the environment.

When the Water Agency assumed responsibility for these systems in 1995, the rates being paid by residents were covering only operating costs and funds were not being set aside for long-term replacement of facilities or capital improvements. This resulted in treatment plants and collection systems becoming obsolete or worn out.

### How Sanitation District Fees Are Used



*The chart shows the percent of ratepayer fees that are spent for sanitation systems on operations and maintenance and capital investment, debt service and savings. The amounts in parentheses are the annual totals for the eight systems operated by the Water Agency.*

Since that time, the Water Agency has greatly increased investments in the replacement of equipment and infrastructure by increasing rates, issuing bonds, and obtaining state and federal funding. For example, between 1995 and 2014 more than \$140 million in capital expansion and replacement projects were funded for the systems managed by the Water Agency. In addition,



**INSIDE SPRING 2015**  
p5 – All About Prop. 218  
p7 – Rate Protest Form

*The design and environmental review process is under way for a proposed upgrade to the current Occidental County Sanitation District Wastewater Treatment Facility.*

ongoing preventative maintenance and a strategy to set aside adequate funds to replace infrastructure and equipment have allowed a gradual decrease in the size of rate increases over the past five years.

Sewer rate increases for municipal wastewater systems in Sonoma County over the past 10 years averaged 8% per year. By comparison, annual rate increases have averaged below 6% for the sanitation districts and zones operated by the Water Agency. This has been accomplished while keeping up with operations and maintenance costs and setting money aside for capital replacement funds, which are used to pay for the replacement of equipment and facilities and protect the investment in these community assets.

The strategic goal in setting rates for the sanitation zones and districts is to operate, maintain and replace facilities and equipment in order to preserve the system's assets and protect ratepayers' investments. Ratepayer funds and the wastewater collection and treatment facilities are community assets, and the Water Agency is committed to their long-term protection and safe operation.

*Continued on page 2*



## HOW YOUR SANITATION DISTRICT BUDGET WORKS

Since 1995 the Sonoma County Water Agency has been responsible for managing the eight sanitation zones and districts that were formerly managed by the County of Sonoma. The Water Agency strives to operate and maintain these facilities in an environmentally responsible and fiscally prudent manner. As part of its financial duties, the Water Agency each year publishes proposed changes to sewer service fees in accordance with the requirements of Proposition 218.

The fiscal year for the districts and zones, including the Occidental County Sanitation District (District) begins July 1 of each year and runs through June 30 of the following year, so the information in this notice is for the period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. A five-year capital plan is prepared for the District by Water Agency staff based on the need for replacement of aging collection systems and other assets necessary to process the wastewater according to regulatory requirements. Budgets take into account current maintenance and operations costs, any bond or loan repayments, and the necessity to maintain sufficient financial reserves to cover unexpected damage or system failures. Budgets are developed using estimates for these items and for revenues.

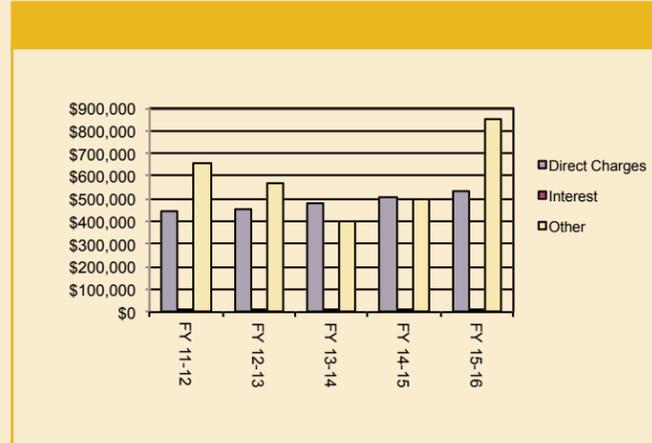
### BUDGET APPROVAL

After Water Agency staff has developed the proposed budgets and rates, the budgets are available for public review at libraries throughout the county and at the Water Agency office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa. Typically, this happens at the end of March each year. In addition, notices of the proposed rates are mailed to the owners of the properties in the District at that time. They are also available online. The public can protest rate increases up to the date of the rate hearings, when rate increases are considered, which are typically held in mid-May at the Board of Supervisors chambers. (A protest form and rate hearing information are available on pgs. 5-7 of this notice).

### BUDGET SUMMARY REVENUE

The primary sources of revenues are the fees charged to the District ratepayers and collected on property tax bills sent out by the Sonoma County Tax Collectors Office. Additional revenue sources include interest on fund balances and new connection fees. Proceeds from bonds and debt paid through property assessments

may increase the funds available to spend on capital projects but are not counted as District revenue. Grants are also a revenue source. Below is a chart showing the District revenue for the last four years and the projected revenues for the next fiscal year:



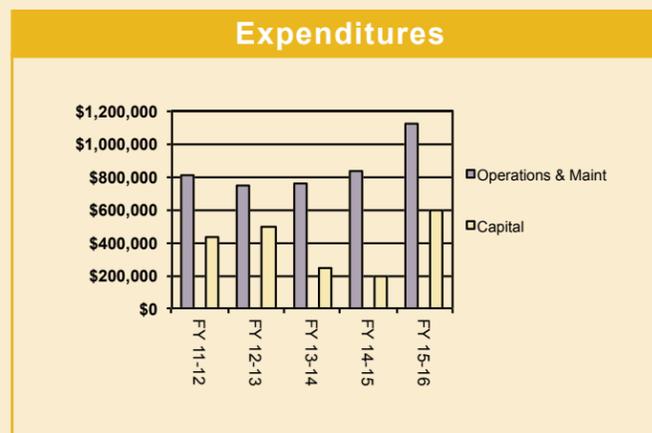
### EXPENDITURES

Your District spends money to:

- Operate the wastewater collection and treatment facilities;
- Maintain and repair District facilities; and
- Repay bond, other debt and miscellaneous liabilities that may occur as a result of operation.
- Replace aging infrastructure or make capital investments needed to comply with water quality standards.

Your District also spends money to accomplish the capital projects needed in the District.

The chart below shows expenses for the past four years and next year's budget:



# 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. I am submitting this form to protest the proposed sewer rate 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 County Water Agency  
 404 Aviation Blvd.  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Fold Here Second

# PROPOSITION 218

## Further Information Available Prior to the Hearing

At the hearing, the Board will consider adoption of an ordinance which will establish the increased fee. A copy of the ordinance is on file and available for review at the Sonoma County Water Agency, 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. In addition, the following persons may be contacted at the Water Agency at (707) 526-5370 for further information and/or obtaining copies of the draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2015-16:

Manuel Olvera, Engineering Technician III  
Candi Bryon, Department Analyst

## Property Owner 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 which will be subject to the fee 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.

Either prior to or at the public hearing, property owners may submit written protests respecting the fee. At the public hearing, the Board will consider all written protests which 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) will be allowed and must be received no later than the following deadlines:

If submitted by mail, they must be received (NOT postmarked) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 18, 2015, at the mailing address on the form.

If hand delivered, they must be delivered no later than the close of the public hearing on May 19, 2015, to:  
Clerk of the Board  
Board Meeting Room, as set forth in the opening paragraph

**Date of this Notice: March 27, 2015**

## REBATES

**CLOTHES WASHER REBATE** Receive up to \$125 back on the purchase and installation of a new, qualifying high-efficiency clothes washer (HEW). Rebates are available for all Energy Star Most Efficient listed clothes washers except those containing silver ion technology. A \$75 rebate may also be available from PG&E.

**TOILET REBATE** Get up to \$150 back on the purchase and installation of each new, qualifying high-efficiency toilet (HET) from the List of Qualifying Models.

**HIGH-EFFICIENCY FIXTURE DIRECT INSTALL PROGRAM** A limited number of high-efficiency fixture retrofits, including toilet, urinal, faucet aerator and showerhead replacements, are offered at no cost to eligible properties.

Download rebate application forms and learn more at [www.sonomacountywater.org/sanitation-rebates](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/sanitation-rebates) or call (707) 547-1918.

### PUBLIC INVITED ON FREE TOURS

The Water Agency is pleased to host public tours of the Russian River water supply system, the Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup Treatment Plant and energy projects. To sign up for the tours described below, please fill out the online registration form at [www.sonomacountywater.org/tours](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/tours). Additional details will follow once your registration is received.

### ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY TOUR

See firsthand a subset of energy and sustainability projects the Water Agency has developed in an effort to deliver Carbon Free Water by 2015 during the Energy and Sustainability Tour. This tour is Thursday, April 9, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tour participants will meet at 404 Aviation Blvd. in Santa Rosa.

### RUSSIAN RIVER WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM TOUR

The Water Agency invites the public to attend a free half-day tour of the Russian River water supply system. Tour participants will visit facilities that divert, pump and treat the water delivered by the Water Agency to more than 600,000 residents in portions of Sonoma and Marin counties. These facilities will include the rubber dam, fish ladders, infiltration ponds and water collector 6 – one of the largest water collectors of its type in the world. This tour is offered in English and Spanish.

**Sign up in English:** Saturday, April 11th, 9 a.m. to Noon.

**Inscríbete en Español:** Sábado, 11 de Abril 2015 de 9 a.m. a mediodía

**Sign up in English:** Saturday, May 16th 2015 9 a.m. to Noon

**Inscríbete en Español:** Sábado, 16 de Mayo 2015 de 9 a.m. a mediodía

### QUESTIONS?

For more information on the above tours, please contact Ryan Pedrotti, Water Education Programs Specialist, at (707) 521-6209 or [ryan.pedrotti@scwa.ca.gov](mailto:ryan.pedrotti@scwa.ca.gov).

### The Lateral Replacement Program

This program provides funding to replace customers' poor performing laterals. Many of the lateral sewer pipes in the District are old and contributing unwanted stormwater inflow to the sewer system during wet weather. Sign up for the program or learn more at [www.sonomacountywater.org/occidental-lateral](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/occidental-lateral) or call (707) 524-1179.

### Russian River Watershed Immediate Drought Relief Program: Grass Removal Rebate

If you are a well user within the Russian River watershed, you may now be eligible to save money and conserve water by replacing the grass at your home. Through emergency drought relief funding, the Water Agency is offering homeowners \$0.50 per square foot of grass removed and replaced with low water use plants, up to 500 sq feet. To view a full list of the program guidelines and qualifications visit [www.sonomacountywater.org/drought](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/drought). Due to limited funds, this program will only be offered while funding is available.

## UPDATE ON OCCIDENTAL RECYCLED WATER PROJECT

A meeting to discuss the beginning of the design process and environmental analysis for the proposed District Recycled Water Project (Project) was held in January of this year. The meeting to discuss the Notice of Preparation was the first step in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. For the past 18 months, ratepayers and people living in the outlying areas have regularly attended community meetings on the issue, asking hard questions and proposing a variety of ideas to help minimize rate increases while beneficially using the recycled water.

**HERE IS THE PROBLEM:** The District's current treatment plant is old and needs upgrading. The plant currently treats water to a secondary level. In addition, the District is under a cease-and-desist order, by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, to end the discharge of recycled water into Graham's Pond by January 1, 2018. The pond is currently used to store recycled water.

### THE DISTRICT IS PROPOSING THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVE:

- Upgrade treatment to a tertiary level, plus any changes that will allow for discharges into Dutch Bill Creek from October 1-May 15. Storage options will be needed.
- The Project is currently contemplating two possible treatment sites: The existing lift station or the existing treatment plant. Disinfection and filtration would be included in the treatment process.
- The recycled water would be used to irrigate agricultural operations in the Harrison Grade area to offset current groundwater pumping and the trucking of water from other watersheds.
- The District is interested in storage of recycled water for irrigation.
- While a pipeline route is identified in the Notice of Preparation (NOP), the actual route could vary after design work is conducted and a treatment location is determined.
- Potential of a recycled water truck-filling station (locals could truck water for landscape irrigation) at the CDF fire station on Acreage Lane.
- Once a preferred project has been identified through the design process, the ongoing operations and maintenance costs will be estimated. If the project is found to be affordable to the District's ratepayers, the project will then undergo CEQA review. A draft document that identifies the proposed project and any potential impacts and mitigation measures to avoid or minimize those impacts will be made available to the public for review and comment.

The next step is the preparation of an environmental document. At the same time, the District is hiring a design consultant to further develop the project, including determining the best location for treatment and a specific pipeline route. By 2017, we hope to have a complete design and for construction to be under way.

Please email [Ann.DuBay@scwa.ca.gov](mailto:Ann.DuBay@scwa.ca.gov) if you are interested in being added to the District's email list. In the meantime, check our webpage, [www.sonomacountywater.org/OCSD](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/OCSD) for environmental documents, project facts, and timeline and information about recycled water.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#### What is the current capacity of the District's Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF)?

The current WWTF can accommodate an average daily dry weather flow of up to 50,000 gallons per day (gpd). Wastewater inflow to the WWTF is highly variable and can range from an average of 20,000 gpd to 100,000 gpd during heavy storms.

#### How is wastewater treated at the WWTF?

Wastewater is currently treated to the secondary level. This level of treatment allows solids to settle out and then adds bacteria to consume the organic matter and oxygen, transforming the organic matter into carbon dioxide and water. Wastewater treated to this level no longer meets the permit requirements for discharge into Dutch Bill Creek.

#### What is the role of Graham's Pond?

The District uses Graham's Pond to store the recycled water during the summer season (May 15 through September 30) when discharge into Dutch Bill Creek is not permitted. Recycled water held in the storage pond may be used for irrigation or held for discharge during the discharge season. Current capacity of Graham's Pond is approximately 4.6 million gallons (or 14 acre-feet).

#### What is the allowable discharge during the discharge season?

Discharge is permitted between Oct. 1 and May 14 and is allowed to be 1% of the total water flow for Dutch Bill Creek as measured at Camp Meeker, downstream of Lancel Creek.

#### What is tertiary level wastewater treatment?

Tertiary treatment uses secondary treatment and further adds a physical barrier that water must pass through, such as a membrane or filtration system. Tertiary treated water is available for irrigation of crops, landscapes and pasture lands.

# PROPOSITION 218

## Sonoma County Water Agency Occidental County Sanitation District

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED SEWER SERVICE FEE INCREASE

#### Date, Time, and Place of Public Hearing

On May 19, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Board Meeting Room, 575 Administration Drive, Room 102A, Santa Rosa, California, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Occidental County Sanitation District (District) will conduct a public hearing to consider increasing the annual sewer service fee to be collected on account of sewage collection and treatment services provided by the sewer system of the District to property within the District.

#### Property Owner Obligation

The fee will be imposed on each parcel upon which is located one or more structures which are connected to the system and the fee will be collected on the general property tax bill administered by Sonoma County. Payment of the fee will be the responsibility of the owner of the parcel.

#### What the Fee is for and How the Funds Collected Will be Used

The fee is imposed for two purposes: (a) to finance the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of the system and, (b) to pay the capital replacement program costs of the system. The purpose of the capital replacement program is to provide for the long-term replacement of system facilities as they wear out.

#### Amount of Proposed Fee Increase and Method of Calculating the Increased Fee

Effective July 1, 2015, the District proposes to increase the fee to \$1,998 per year per "equivalent single-family dwelling" (ESD), an increase of \$99, or 5.2% versus current year. A standard single-family home constitutes one ESD. Parcels which have other uses (for example, apartments and commercial buildings) will be assigned a number of ESDs using standard equivalency factors which estimate the probable quantity and quality of sewage effluent normally generated by such uses in comparison to a single-family home.

The increased fee has been calculated by dividing the annual costs of providing wastewater treatment and collection service by the estimated number of ESDs to arrive at the fee per ESD of \$1,998, and for parcels having more than one ESD assigned, the fee is calculated by multiplying the number of ESDs assigned to the parcel times \$1,998. The draft proposed budget for fiscal year 2015-16 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 the Sonoma County Regional Libraries in Santa Rosa (Main & Northwest), Windsor, Healdsburg, Cloverdale, Guerneville, Sebastopol, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Rincon Valley, Sonoma, and Forestville (El Molino High School).